SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE GREAT MASTER

Swami Saradananda

SRI RAMAKRISHNA
THE GREAT MASTER

Originally written in
Bengali in five volumes

By SWAMI SARADANANDA

A DIRECT DISCIPLE OF THE MASTER

SRI RAMAKRISHNA
THE GREAT MASTER

TRANSLATED

BY

SWAMI JAGADANANDA

Sri **R**amakrishna **M**ath
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जन्म कर्म च मे दिव्यमेवं यो वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ।
त्यक्त्वा देहं पुनर्जन्म नैति मामेति सोऽर्जुन ॥

Whosoever knows, in the true light, My divine birth and action will not be born again when he leaves his body; he will attain Me, O Arjuna.

—Gita, IV-9

ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम् ।
मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥

In whatsoever way men approach Me, even so do I reward them; (for it is) My path, O son of Pritha, (that) men tread, in all things.

—Gita, IV-11

सर्वधर्मस्थापकस्त्वं सर्वधर्मस्वरूपकः
आचार्याणां महाचार्यो रामकृष्णाय ते नमः ॥

"Salutation to you, O Ramakrishna, the Reinstator of all Religions, the Embodiment of all Religions, the Great Master among all the Masters."

—Swami Saradananda

PUBLISHER'S NOTE TO THE FIRST EDITION

We have much pleasure in presenting to the public "*Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*"—the most comprehensive, authentic and critical estimate of the life, Sadhana and teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. Sixty-six years have rolled down the stream of time since Sri Ramakrishna left the mortal coil. But the wave of spirituality raised by his life, has touched even the distant shores of both the hemispheres and is resurgent still in all its native potency in the thought-life of the different countries of the civilized world of today. In India his name has become a household word, a symbol of hope and solace and a sacred Mantra to conjure with. His inspired utterances have brought light where utter darkness prevailed before, solace to many a suffering soul and peace to many a distracted mind. The life which could have such a marvellous influence within such a short period, it is needless to say, is of unprecedented potency, whose full depth and significance will take ages to get revealed to humanity.

Descriptions of this wonderful life were given to the world by his various disciples and admirers from time to time in different languages since his disappearance from the earth. But none of them embodied a detailed account of this unique personality. Srimat Swami Saradanandaji Maharaj, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, and General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission from its very beginning to his passing away in 1927, feeling the necessity of such a biography, brought out five volumes in Bengali under the caption of *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lila-prasanga,* which contain many unpublished details of the life of the Master and can fairly be called an exhaustive treatment of the subject. The Swami wanted to write an English version of his Bengali work, and, in fact, he translated a few chapters which appeared in the two periodicals of the Mission, the *Vedanta Kesari* and the *Prabuddha Bharata,* but owing to his illness and various other causes, he could not complete the work. The eagerness of the general

public outside Bengal to know more details of the wonderful life of the Master was being felt keenly and we thought we would be doing some service to our eager readers, if not to humanity at large, if we would present them with a faithful and literal English translation of the beautiful Bengali biography.

Srimat Swami Jagadanandaji, a very senior and learned monk of our Order, accepted at our request this Herculean task of translating the whole work of five volumes into English and left us under a deep debt of gratitude. It is a matter of great regret that he passed away last December before this remarkable work of his devotion could see the light of day. He took up this translation when he was verging on seventy, but finished the work in an incredibly short time and passed it on to the Editors. A disciple of the Holy Mother, one who knew the revered Swami Saradanandaji Maharaj and many other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna intimately, the Swami is known to many readers of our literature and students of Vedanta as a very good teacher of the Scriptures, as the anonymous editor of many religious books and as the translator of some Vedantic Text-books like Sri Sankaracharya's *Upadesha Sahasri.* His illuminative classes were a treat to all, young and old, lay and monastic, students in the Uttarakhand. One would always notice in him a happy but rare combination of Jnana and Bhakti. Untiring in work, uncompromising in his adherence to the Siddhantas (conclusions) of Vedanta he was throughout conspicuous by his great devotion to the Master and the Holy Mother.

Swami Nirvedananda, the learned writer of "Sri Ramakrishna and Spiritual Renaissance" (in the Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. II) and other books, has written a short but beautiful life of Srimat Swami Saradanandaji Maharaj. This will give the reader an inkling of the real personality of the Author of the book and will partly serve the purpose of an introduction to it. We are much beholden to him for this valuable addition to this work.

Prof. K. Subramanyam, M.A., L.T., Vice-Principal, Vivekananda College, Madras, has kindly gone through the entire manuscript and has ably edited it for us. He deserves our hearty thanks for this noble act.

Dr. Nandalal Bose, the famous artist of Santiniketan (Visva-bharati), has very kindly drawn the Dust cover (Panchavati at Dakshineswar) as a labour of love. We are indeed grateful to him.

In bringing out such a big volume, we have received substantial help in various ways from many lay and monastic friends who prefer to remain unknown soldiers. We offer our sincere thanks to them.

Diacritical marks have not been used in the body of the book, but they have been explained and the pronunciation of important Indian words has been shown with diacritics in the Index.

A word about the book itself: *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lila-prasanga* holds a place, unique of its kind in hagiography. The life-story of a divine personality worshipped by millions as an Incarnation of God has never been written in this wise by any one of his apostles. Yet the reader will notice how the author has made the book so reliable and interesting by giving it a modern touch and using the scientific method all through. The book is not simply a biography of the latest Incarnation of the modern age; it combines a biography with a lucid study of the various cults of religion, mysticism and philosophy obtaining in India and elsewhere from the prehistoric times down to the modern era. The Subject-matter, the life of Sri Ramakrishna, is nothing short of an encyclopaedia of religion and philosophy.

It will not be out of place to make some mention of the Tantras, the sacred literature of the Shaktas of Bengal and elsewhere. Sir John Woodroffe alias Arthur Avalon, and his Indian collaborators have made the Tantras partly available to the English-reading public. As they have used the scientific method, their studies of the Tantras have much appeal to the modern mind. Sri Ramakrishna practised all the disciplines enjoined in the Sixty-four principal Tantras under the guidance of a good teacher. Some practices of the Tantras known as “left” which were not entirely ruled out by Sri Ramakrishna have been actually reoriented by him. Much of modern scientific teaching is consonant with the fundamental teaching of the Tantras. Things or practices which *seem* repulsive to the modern mind are not actually so. Readers, endowed with an exalted vision and the modern spirit of enquiry into truth, will be able to understand that the Tantric aspirants’ practices involving contacts with what are termed lowly, bad, ugly and vulgar, helped them to sublimate to the extent of making them realize the divine power which is always high, true, good and beautiful. We crave the thoughtfulness of the readers in their study of the Tantric chapter

of Sri Ramakrishna's Sadhana as we have not sacrificed the beauty and the substance of that episode to satisfy the claims of "modern" taste.

A right attitude is also necessary to enter into the spirit of Sri Ramakrishna's Sadhana according to the Madhura Bhava of the Vaishnava school. We trust our readers will never lack it. "Where you cannot unriddle, learn to trust" is an adage that may be very helpful here. There is nothing queer or strange in the flights of the genius of one of the greatest master-mystics of the world like Sri Ramakrishna.

May a serious perusal of this new book inspire humanity to take a step forward on its march to Truth!

Sri Ramakrishna Math
Mylapore, Madras-4
October, 1952.

PUBLISHER

PUBLISHER'S NOTE TO THE FIFTH EDITION

The fifth edition of *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* is appearing in two parts. Both the reader and the buyer will find this division convenient. The Index and the Life of the author, Swami Saradananda, are shifted to the second part, in order to facilitate the division of the book into two equal parts. The new edition has also been carefully revised so as to make it more readable.

October 1978 PUBLISHER

PUBLISHER'S NOTE TO THE SIXTH EDITION

The first edition of *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* was released in 1952 in a single volume. It was later revised and released in 2 volumes in 1978. Now, on the auspicious occasion of the centenary of Sri Ramakrishna Math Publishing House (1908-2008), we are glad to bring out the single volume edition again. In this revised sixth edition, the language and general structure of the original version have been retained. However, 'The book and the author'—the note about Swami Saradananda by Swami Nirvedananda has been shifted to the end. The Chronology of important events in the life of the Master has been revised. A few additional photographs have also been added.

March 29, 2008 PUBLISHER

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22. Vaishnavacharan saw the Master for the first time during the festival at Panihati in 1859. His idea about the Master

23. Other kinds of Sadhana of the Master at this time—(1) "rupee-earth, earth-rupee", (2) cleaning unclean places, (3) regarding night-soil and sandalpaste as the same

24. The aspirant's own mind becomes his Guru at last. The Master's mind functioned as the Guru at this time. Examples of this: (i) enjoying the bliss of Kirtan in his subtle body

(ii) he saw the young Sannyasin within his own body and received instruction from him

and (iii) the vision of the Master on his way to Sihar. Bhairavi Brahmani's decision about it

25. What can be gathered from these visions

26. The Master's visions never proved to be untrue

27. An example: the description of the Master's vision at the time of the worship of Durga in Suresh Chandra Mitra's house in 1885

28. How Rani Rasmani and Mathur examined the Master owing to their mistaken notions

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MARRIAGE AND RETURN TO DAKSHINESWAR

1. The Master at Kamarpukur

2. The Master's relatives were under the impression that he was possessed by a ghost
3. An exorcist invited a Chanda
4. The opinion of the Master's relatives. What led to his normality
5. An instance of the Master's Yogic powers
6. On finding him normal, the Master's relatives decided to get him married
7. The reason why the Master consented to marry
8. The Master selected his bride
9. The marriage
10. The conduct of Chandramani and of the Master after the marriage
11. The Master returned to Calcutta
12. The Master's divine inebriation for the second time
13. Chandradevi's Prayopavesana before Siva
14. The state in which the Master was at that time
15. Mathur saw the Master as Siva and Kali.

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THE COMING OF THE BHAIRAVI BRAHMANI

1. Severe illness of Rani Rasmani
2. Rani's execution of a Devottara deed of the Dinajpur properties and her death
3. The Rani's vision at the time of passing away
4. What the Rani apprehended on her death-bed is about to happen.
5. Improvement in the worldly affairs of Mathur Babu and his arrangement about the divine service in the temple
6. The influence and prosperity of Mathur were for helping the Master
7. The idea of Mathur and others about the Master
8. The arrival of the Brahmani at Dakshineswar
9. What the Bhairavi said to the Master when she saw him first

10. The first conversation between the Master and the Bhairavi
11. The Bhairavi had an extraordinary vision under the Panchavati
12. The discussion on the Sastras under the Panchavati
13. The reason why the Bhairavi came to live at the Devamandal Ghat
14. How the Bhairavi came to have the conviction that the Master was an incarnation of God
15. The reason why Pandit Vaishnavacharan came to Dakshineswer

CHAPTER XI

TANTRIC SADHANA

1. The divine insight produced by Sadhana made the Brahmani understand truly the state of the Master
2. The reason why the Brahmani asked the Master to undertake Tantric Sadhana
3. Why the Brahmani helped the Master in his Sadhana, even though she knew that he was an incarnation of God
4. The Brahmani was eager to make the Master experience all the results of the austerity practised by her
5. The Master undertook Tantric discipline with the permission of the divine Mother. The measure of his eagerness for this discipline.
6. The Master spoke about his eagerness at the time of Sadhana
7. The construction of the Panchamundi seat and the performance of all the Sadhanas according to the sixty four Tantras
8. Seeing the Goddess in the form of the woman
9. Renunciation of aversion
10. Other Tantric realizations and the Master's behaviour at the time of Tantric Sadhanas
11. One story of Ganesh's filial attitude towards all women
12. The story of the circumambulation of the universe by Ganesh and Kartik
13. The uniqueness of the Master in his Tantric Sadhana
14. That speciality was the intention of the divine Mother

15. What is proved by the Master's attaining success without taking a women
16. The purpose of the Tantric practices
17. Another reason why the Master undertook Tantric Sadhanas
18. The visions and experiences of the Master at the time of the Tantric Sadhanas
19. He took the remnants of food taken by jackals and dogs
20. He saw himself pervaded by the fire of knowledge
21. He saw the awakening of the Kundalini
22. His vision of the Brahmayoni, the divine womb
23. He heard the Anahata Dhvani
24. The vision about the worthlessness of miraculous powers
25. The Master's talk with Swami Vivekananda about the eight miraculous powers
26. His vision of the deluding power of the universal Mother
27. The beauty of Shodasi, the Mahavidya
28. As the result of Tantric Sadhana, the Master became free from body-consciousness and attained a childlike nature
29. The splendour of the Master's person during Tantric Sadhanas
30. The Bhairavi Brahmani was a part of Yogamaya

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THE SADHU WITH MATTED HAIR AND THE MASTER'S SADHANA OF THE VATSALYA BHAVA

1. Mathur's experience and behaviour on receiving the Master's grace
2. Mathur undertook the religious vow of a gift of a 'mountain of food'
3. The Master met Padmalochan, the Vedantic scholar
4. The reason why the Master undertook the Vaishnava Sadhanas
5. There arose feminine modes in the Master's mind before he undertook the Sadhana of the Vatsalya Bhava and the Madhura Bhava

6. A discussion on the constitution of the Master's mind
7. How nonexistent was any bondage due to past impression in his mind
8. The noble qualities the Master had when he engaged himself in Sadhana
9. Illustrations of the Master's uncommon mental make up and a discussion on it
10. Mathur's services to holy men at the Master's behest
11. Jatadhari's arrival at Dakshineswar
12. The intimate relation of the Master with Jatadhari
13. The Master in the mood of a female companion of the divine Mother
14. The Master engaged himself in the Vatsalya mood of Sadhana during the prevalence of womanly feelings in him
15. His effort to realize the ultimate limits of any idea that arose in his mind; whether one should do so or not
16. Controlling of desires is not necessary for a confirmed Sadhaka like the Master. The reason thereof
17. Such Sadhakas are not perturbed even by the manner and time of their death. Examples thereof
18. No desire tarnished with selfishness arises in the mind of such a Sadhaka
19. All mentations of such Sadhakas correspond to facts. Examples in the Master's life
20. The Master was initiated in the Vatsalya mood of Sadhana by Jatadhari. He practised it and reached its acme
21. Jatadhari made a gift of the image of Ramalala to the Master
22. To what extent the Bhairavi Brahmani helped the Master at the time of Vatsalya Sadhana

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THE ESSENCE OF THE MADHURA BHAVA (SWEET MOOD)

1. The hard inward struggle of the aspirant and his goal

2. The natural inclination of the minds of extraordinary Sadhakas is to remain in the Nirvikalpa Samadhi. Sri Ramakrishna is one of this class

3. What are called Sunya and Purna are one and the same Reality

4. The nature of non-duality

5. The five moods of Santa, Dasya, etc., and the God attainable by them

6. The nature of the five moods. How they help man to progress

7. Love is the means to the Sadhana of the five spiritual moods; and the personality of God is its object

8. Love brings to an end the consciousness of power. This removal is the measure of the moods

9. The devotional scriptures and the life of Sri Ramakrishna teach us that with the help of each one of these moods man can ultimately realize the non-dual Reality

10. The objection and answer regarding the attainment of the non-dual Reality with the help of the five moods

11. The prevalence of the Sadhanas of different moods in different ages

12. What is seen regarding the full development of the five mood in India and in other countries

13. What indicates the depth of the aspirant's mood

14. What occurs to one's mind when one sees the Master attain success in all the moods

15. A discussion on the lack of records of the spiritual practices of the spiritual heroes

16. This statement is applicable equally

    (1) to Krishna

    (2) to Buddha

    (3) to Jesus

    (4) to Sankara and

    (5) to Chaitanya. Sri Ramakrishna on the ultimate truth of the Madhura Bhava

17. The Madhura Bhava and the Vaishnava teachers

18. An objection to the historicity of the Lila at Vrindavan and the refutation thereof

19. In order to understand this play at Vrindavan, it is necessary to comprehend the history of devotional moods; what the Master said about it

20. The reason why Chaitanya induced man, the sterner sex, to practise the Madhura Bhava

21. The spiritual condition of the country of that time. How Chaitanya improved it

22. The main point of the Madhura Bhava

23. One should have that all-devouring love for God, which a paramour has for her lover

24. The Madhura Bhava is the aggregate of all other moods plus something

25. How Chaitanya did good to humanity with the help of the Madhura Bhava

26. How a Vedantin accepts the Sadhana of the Madhura Bhava as conducive to an aspirant's wellbeing

27. The ultimate aim of practising the Madhura Bhava is to attain the loving mood of Radha

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THE MASTER'S SADHANA OF THE MADHURA BHAVA

1. The natural inclination of the Master's mind since childhood was to merge in spiritual moods

2. What changes were brought in his mind during his Sadhana

3. The Madhura Bhava was not to the Master's liking before the time of his Sadhana of that mood

4. No Sadhana of the Master was unscriptural. What it proves

5. Examples of the natural bent of the Master's mind to follow the scriptures, even unknowingly. The assumption of different names and robes at the time of Sadhana

6. Engaged in the practices of the Madhura Bhava, the Master put on female dress

7. All the actions of the Master became womanly when he was in that attire

8. The Master's behaviour as a woman friend of the ladies of Mathur's family

9. While he was in a woman's dress, it was difficult to distinguish the Master from a woman

10. The Master's actions and his physical changes during his Sadhana of the Madhura Bhava

11. A contrast between the Master's transcendental love and that conceived by us

12. What the devotional scriptures say about Srimati's transcendental love

13. Sri Gauranga came to exemplify the transcendental love of Srimati

14. The Master meditated on Radha and had her vision

15. The Master felt that he was Srimati. The reason thereof

16. Extraordinary changes came on the Master's body when he was in the mood of a woman

17. That the mind creates the body is demonstrated from these bodily changes of his under the influence of strong emotions

18. The Master had the vision of Sri Krishna

19. In his youth the Master desired to be born again as a girl

20. The Master realized, "The three—the scriptures, the devotees and the divine Lord, —are the One and the One is the three"

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THE MASTER'S SADHANA OF THE VEDANTA

1. The study of the Master's state of mind during this time:

   (1) his complete renunciation of lust and gold

   (2) the discrimination between the real and the unreal; the dispassion for the results of action in this world and the next

   (3) the six treasures of Sama, Dama, etc., and the intense desire for liberation

and (4) the dependence on God and the fearlessness arising from his visions of the divine Mother

2. What the Master said about his doing Sadhana even after the realization of God

3. The Master's mother decided to live on the Ganga and came to Dakshineswar

4. The Master's mother was untouched by avarice

5. Haladhari gave up worshipping in the Kali temple; Akshay came

6. The reason that led the Master to practise the non-dual mood after he had attained perfection in Bhavasamadhi

7. The rationale of his effort to attain the non-dual mood at the end of his Sadhana of the devotional moods

8. Sri Tota puri arrived at Dakshineswar

9. The Master and Tota Puri greeted each other. The Master had the divine instruction to practise Vedanta

10. Tota's conception of the Mother of the universe

11. The Master wanted to be initiated into Sannyasa secretly, —its reason

12. Rites preliminary to the initiation into Sannyasa were performed

13. Prayer mantras preliminary to the Sannyasa initiation

14. The purport of the Mantra of the Viraja Homa performed before initiation

15. The Master gave up his sacred thread and tuft of hair on his head and was initiated into Sannyasa

16. Tota urged the Master to remain identified with Brahman Itself

17. Tota's behaviour at the Master's failure to make his mind free from all functions. The Master's attainment of the Nirvikalpa Samadhi

18. Tota examined whether the Master really attained Nirvikalpa Samadhi. His surprise

19. Tota tried to bring the Master down from Samadhi

20. The Master cured Jagadamba Dasi of a fatal disease

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EPILOGUE OF THE MASTER'S VEDANTA SADHANA AND HIS PRACTICE OF ISLAM

1. The severe disease of the Master and his unique behaviour at this time
2. The Master's auditive experience when he was established in the non-dual state. The results of that experience
3. What the scriptures say about the attainment of the power of remembering previous lives just before realizing Brahman
4. What the scriptures say about the attainment of Yogic powers, and the state in which all resolves come true
5. The causes producing the Master's extraordinary realization become understandable when we study his life in the light of the above mentioned sayings of the scriptures
6. Why the experiences mentioned before were not had simultaneously
7. The realization of the Master that the attainment of the non-dual consciousness is the ultimate aim of all disciplines
8. The above mentioned realization of the Master was never fully grasped by anyone before
9. The Master's practice of Islam, an example of the liberality of his mind established in the non-dual knowledge
10. The arrival of the Sufi Govinda Ray
11. The Master's resolve after talking with Govinda
12. Initiated by Govinda, the Master succeeded in the Sadhana
13. The behaviour of the Master at the time of practising Islam
14. It appears from the practice of Islam by the Master that there will be brotherly union between the Hindu and the Muslim communities in India in future
15. How strong the memory of non-duality was in the Master's mind during the following years
16. A few examples of it:
    (i) the old grass-cutter

(ii) an injured butterfly

(iii) the new Durva grass trampled

(iv) the Master's body was injured by the blow dealt at a boatman's body

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THE MASTER'S VISIT TO HIS NATIVE VILLAGE

1. The Master went to Kamarpukur with Hriday and the Bhairavi Brahmani
2. How the Master's friends and relatives found him
3. The Holy Mother came to Kamarpukur
4. The Master's behaviour with his relatives and boyhood friends at that time
5. What the Master said about the spiritual progress of some of them
6. The reason why the people of Kamarpukur appeared wonderfully new to the Master
7. The Master's eternal relation of love with the people of his birth-place
8. The Master began to do his duty to his wife
9. The success the Master attained in it
10. The Brahmani's apprehension and the change in her attitude on seeing the Master behave thus with his wife
11. The Brahmani's power of discrimination was ruined owing to the increase of pride and egoism
12. The event illustrating this
13. Hriday quarrelled with the Brahmani
14. The Brahmani recognized her mistake; and apprehensive of having given offence, she repented, asked pardon and left for Kasi
15. The Master returned to Dakshineswar

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THE MASTER'S PILGRIMAGE AND THE STORY OF HRIDAYRAM

1. The Master’s pilgrimage settled
2. The day of starting
3. The arrangement about the pilgrimage
4. Visit to Sri Vaidyanath and service to the poor
5. A mishap on the way
6. They stayed at Kedarghat and paid their obeisance to Sri Viswanath
7. The Master and Trailanga Swami
8. The Master’s behaviour at Prayag
9. The Master visited places like Nidhuvan in Vrindavan
10. The Master returned to Kasi and stayed there
11. He met the Brahmani at Kasi. The last information about her
12. The Master went to see Mahesh, the Vina player
13. He returned to Dakshineswer. His behaviour at that time
14. The death of Hriday’s wife and his dispassion
15. Hriday in Bhavasamadhi
16. Hriday’s wonderful vision
17. Hriday’s mind became dull
18. Obstacle to Hriday’s Sadhana
19. Hriday celebrated the autumn worship of Durga
20. Hriday had a vision of the Master at the time of the worship of Durga
21. The last occasion of Hriday’s worship of Durga

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THE DEATH OF THE MASTER’S RELATIONS

1. The story of Akshay, son of Ramkumar
2. The beauty of Akshay
3. Akshay’s devotion to Sri Ramachandra and his love of Sadhana
4. Akshay’s marriage
5. Akshay fell severely ill after his marriage, recovered and went back to Dakshineswer

6. Akshay fell ill for the second time. The Master had prescience of Akshay's death before he passed away

7. Hriday's apprehension and behaviour when he was told that Akshay would not survive

8. Akshay's death and the Master's behaviour

9. The Master's agony at the death of Akshay

10. The Master's brother Rameswar was appointed priest

11. The Master went with Mathur to Ranaghat. The service of the poor as Narayana there

12. The Master saw Mathur's own house and that of his Guru

13. The Master occupied the seat of Sri Chaitanya at the Hari Sabha of Kolutola. He visited Kalna, Navadwip, etc.

14. Mathur's selfless devotion

15. The profound relation of love between the Master and Mathur

16. An anecdote

17. Another anecdote

18. No wonder that Mathur had such a selfless devotion. What the Sastras say

19. Mathur passed away

20. The Master saw the event in Bhavasamadhi

CHAPTER XX

THE WORSHIP OF SHODASI

1. The Holy Mother was very young when she saw the Master for the first time after the marriage

2. The mental attitude of the Holy Mother on seeing the Master for the first time

3. How the Holy Mother lived at Jayramvati in that happy mood

4. The cause of the Holy Mother's mental anguish and her resolve to come to Dakshineswar

5. The opportunity to carry out the resolve into practice

6. The Holy Mother started on foot with her father for a bath in the Ganga. She had fever on the way

7. A wonderful vision the Holy Mother had during her illness

8. The Holy Mother reached Dakshineswar at night with fever on. The Master's behaviour

9. The Holy Mother lived there overflowing with joy on account of that behaviour of the Master

10. The Master's testing of his knowledge of Brahman. His training of his wife

11. The reason why the Master did not do this before

12. The Master's method of teaching. How he behaved with the Holy Mother at that time

13. How the Master looked upon the Holy Mother

14. The Master tested his self-control

15. No incarnation of God behaved with his wife as the Master did. Its result

16. What the Master said about the extraordinary nature of the Holy Mother

17. The Master's resolve after he successfully stood the test

18. The preparations for the worship of Shodasi

19. The Master sprinkled consecrated water on the Holy Mother and worshipped her

20. He went into Samadhi at the end of the worship. He offered Japa, worship, etc., at the feet of the Devi

21. As the Holy Mother's sleep was disturbed on account of the Master's constant Samadhi, she went to bed elsewhere. Later she went back to Kamarpukur

CHAPTER XXI

EPILOGUE TO THE STORY OF THE MASTER'S SADHANAS

1. The Master's desire for Sadhana came to an end with the worship of Shodasi

2. For, what was left for him to do after finishing the Sadhanas according to all faiths?

3. He attained perfection in a marvellous way according to the religion founded by Lord Jesus

4. How the Master's vision of the form of Jesus was proved to be true to fact

5. What the Master said about Buddha's being an incarnation of God and about his faith

6. The Master's faith in the Jaina and Sikh religions

7. The restatement of the Master's extraordinary experiences after he became perfected in the Sadhanas according to all faiths

8. Experiences about himself:

(1) he is an incarnation of God

(2) there is no liberation for him

and (3) he knew when he would pass away

9. Experiences about spiritual matters in general:

(1) all religions are true—as many faiths so many paths

(2) man must accept doctrine of dualism, qualified non-dualism or non-dualism according to the state of his mind

(3) people in general will progress by resorting to Karmayoga

(4) a community given to this liberal view is to be founded and

(5) those who are in their last life will accept his doctrine

10. The opinions expressed by three eminent Sadhakas well versed in the Sastras, on seeing the Master at different time

11. The time of the coming of the Pandits ascertained

12. The Master's desire to see his devotees of the inner circle. He cried out for them

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THE PRINCIPAL EVENTS OF THE MASTER'S LIFE FROM AFTER

THE WORSHIP OF THE SHODASI TO THE COMING OF HIS 'MARKED' DEVOTEES

1. The death of Rameswar
2. Rameswar's charitable nature
3. The Master's prescience of Rameswar's death and his warning to him
4. Thinking that the life of his mother would be in danger at the news of Rameswar's death, the Master pray to the divine Mother. The result of the prayer
5. The behaviour of Rameswar when he knew that death was near at hand
6. After his death Rameswar talked with his friend Gopal
7. Ramlal, the Master's nephew, came to Dakshineswar and was appointed priest. The temple of Annapurna at Chanak
8. The story of Sambhu Mallick, second supplier of the Master's necessaries
9. Sambhu Babu built a room for the Holy Mother. Captain helped. The Master passed one night in that room
10. The Holy Mother fell seriously ill while she was living in that room, and went to Jayramvati
11. The Holy Mother undertook Prayopavesana in Simhavahini's temple and got the medicine
12. The fearless behaviour of Sambhu Babu at the time of his death
13. The last days of Chandramani, the Master's mother, and her death
14. The Master went to perform Tarpana at his mother's death, but could not do it. He was in a state in which actions drop off naturally
15. The Master went to see Kesav Babu
16. Kesav in the garden at Belgharia
17. His first talk with Kesav
18. The intimate relation between the Master and Kesav
19. How Kesav behaved at Dakshineswar
20. The Master explained to Kesav: "Brahman and Its power are one and the same. The three, divine word, devotee, and divine Lord are One, and the

One is the three.”

21. The Coochbehar marriage took place in 1878. Wounded by its repercussion Kesav attained spiritual depth. The Master’s opinion on the marriage

22. Kesav could not fully grasp the ideas and ideals of the Master. He honoured the Master but could not accept the ideal

23. The New Dispensation and the Master’s opinion

24. The intricate national problem of India has been solved by the Master alone

25. The Master’s reaction to Kesav’s death

26. The Master sew Gauranga in Sankirtan

PART THREE
AS THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER (I)

Preface : “As the spiritual Teacher”

The Hindu Religion and Sri Ramakrishna

CHAPTER I

SRI RAMAKRISHNA IN BHAVAMUKHA

1. Deep meaning of the Master’s words
2. Similar are the words of all incarnations of God
3. An example: Girish was asked to give the “power of attorney”
4. The mental state of Girish
5. The state of Girish’s mind after he gave the power of attorney
6. Giving the power of attorney, a bondage of love
7. How Girish was taugh henceforward
8. Girish understood the deep significance of giving the power of attorney
9. It is the incarnations alone that can accept the power of attorney
11. The Master’s vision in connection with accepting the ‘power of attorney’
10. Examples
12. The Master cured leucoderma
13. It is not easy to give the “power of attorney”
14. The state in which the power of attorney can be given
15. Beware of the deception of the mind
16. Another point of view
17. The story of a Brahmin killing a cow
18. The understanding of the Master’s words becomes deeper with the development of the Sadhaka’s mind
19. Understanding will come at the right time
20. It is necessary to stick to Sadhana

21. Give up lukewarm devotion
22. The Master, an embodiment of spiritual moods, used to have bodily changes with the change of moods
23. The Master's power of knowing all the moods in all persons
24. First example: Manimohan's grief over the death of his son
25. Second example: The Master's words on how to get rid of lust
26. Third example: Advice to Yogananda on this matter
27. Fourth example: The story of Manimohan's relative
28. The Master's power of knowing all kinds of mental states of women
29. Its cause
30. The reason why women behaved freely in the presence of the Master
31. First example
32. Second example on the subject
33. The Master bestowed equal grace on women
34. The Master mimicked the gestures of women
35. The moods of both men and women coexisted in the Master
36. The Master could understand the moods of all because he lived in the state of Bhavamukha

CHAPTER II

A FEW WORDS ON BHAVA, SAMADHI AND DARSANA

1. Samadhi is not a disease of the brain
2. It is by Samadhi alone that one attains spirituality and eternal peace
3. It is not a fact that one can make no progress in religion, if one has had no vision of deities etc.
4. Faith, renunciation and strength of character are the signs of the realization of spirituality.
5. Ripe "I" and pure desires. The liberated-in-life: Adhikarika Purushas, Isvarakotis and Jivakotis
6. The experience of non-dual consciousness differs in degree in different persons

7. With the deepening of the devotional moods, such as Santa, Dasya, etc., comes Savikalpa Samadhi

8. Bodily changes are inevitable with changes in mental or spiritual moods

9. How to ascertain higher and lower ecstasies

10. Incarnations alone can fully experience all these spiritual moods: Example, the Master's Samadhi

11. The Brahmani asked him not to discuss the Vedanta

12. The Master's determination to dwell always in the Nirvikalpa plane; its nature

13. The unique constitution of the Master's mind

14. The Master's devotion to truthfulness

15. First example

16. Second example

17. Third example

18. The universal Mother did not allow him to take a wrong step

19. The obstacle on the Master's path to Nirvikalpa Samadhi

20. He was for six months in a state in which generally the body drops in twenty one days

21. What the Captain said about the Master's Samadhi

22. What the Master himself said about this

23. Views of the East and the West on bodily changes produced by ideas

24. Kundalini, the coiled power. The repository of the past impressions; how they are destroyed

25. The relation between body and mind

26. Holy company should be kept, as ideas are infectious

27. Bodily change due to concentration of mind

28. The harmony between the paths of devotion (Bhakti) and concentration (Yoga)

29. What is the coiled power? Its states of working and sleeping

30. The progress of the awakened coiled power. The piercing of the six centres and samadhi

31. The Master's experience regarding this

32. His attempts at describing the experiences during Nirvikalpa Samadhi

33. The coiled power has five different kinds of movement on the path of Samadhi

34. The seven planes described in the Vedanta and the Master's words on the spiritual experience in each of them

35. The Master's retentive power

36. He explained the non-dual state in simple language

37. To Swami Turiyananda

38. Vedanta is nothing but the conception that Brahman is real the universe is unreal

39. The realization of God is not possible without His grace

40. The Master's answers when he was asked by Pandit Sasadhar to cure his own disease

41. Swami Vivekananda and other devotees asked the Master importunately to do so. The Master's reply

42. The depth of the Master's non-dual state of consciousness

43. The Master stood the test of every kind

44. The things experienced ideally by the Master proved to be true in the external world

45. The Master had different relations with different devotees

46. The two classes of devotees

47. The Master knew the inner nature of each devotee and established his relationship with him accordingly

48. Through various means did the Master lead the devotees forward on the path of spirituality

49. The devotees and visions of gods and goddesses

50. A devotee had the vision of Vaikuntha

51. The Master's instruction to the devotees of God with forms. Silk thread and the sacrificial lamp

52. Wash the mind out before meditation

53. Which doctrine higher—God with forms or God without forms

54. The harmony between the doctrines of the Divine with forms and the Divine without forms

55. Swami Vivekananda and blind faith

56. Instructions to the followers of the unripe doctrine of God without forms

57. The Master advised the devotees to meditate on his form

58. A relationship with God is necessary. It adds a zest to meditation etc.

59. The “ripe I” and the “unripe I”. As the relationship deepens, one can exert loving pressure on Him.

60. The example of a perverted woman

61. “I will realize God in this very life,” such strength of mind should be cherished

62. Desires must be given up one by one

63. Perseverance like that required in angling is neccessary

64. The divine Lord is quick eared; He hears everything

65. The Master kept an eye on everything in spite of his great tendency to spiritual moods

66. First example

67. Second example

68. Third example: instruction to the Holy Mother

69. The last word on the topic

70. The Master a Veritable king in the realm of ideas

71. His extraordinary power over the human mind. Swami Vivekananda’s remark on it

CHAPTER III

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AS THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER

1. The Master felt annoyed when addressed as a spiritual teacher, a father of a patriarch. How then is the mood of the spiritual teacher possible in him?

2. As he had the firm knowledge that God is in all beings, the Master's ordinary mood was that he was a servant of all

3. The play of the divine Power as spiritual Teacher was seen daily in him during his state of divine consciousness. What the devotees felt at his behaviour then

4. There was no end to the moods of the Master who was an embodiment of all ideas

5. Ordinary people thought that the Master was a devotee and not a knower of Brahman. But if one understands what it is to be in Bhavamukha and under what conditions it is possible, one can not assert that

6. Mental modifications depend for their existence on I-conscious ness. There is Savikalpa Samdhi when it disappears partially, and Nirvikalpa Samadhi when it vanishes completely. The difference between Samadhi and deep sleep or swoon

7. The result of Samadhi is knowledge, increase of bliss and the realization of God

8. The vision and experience of the Master during his Nirvikalpa Samadhi of six months

9. How his body lasted during the period of the complete cessation of his "I-consciousness"

10. A Yogi came, understood the Master's condition and fed him by force

11. The command of the Mother of the universe: "Remain in Bhavamukha"

12. There exist, in the Reality which is "One without a second", a difference in Itself, consisting of the aspects of Saguna and Nirguna and also the Virat "I-ness" pervading the universe. It is this universal "I-ness" that is Isvara or the divine Mother, and by It are brought about the world phenomena

13. It is this universal I-ness that is called Bhavamukha (the source of all ideas), for all kinds of ideas in the world have It alone as their basis

14. The Master's experience in the Nirvikalpa state and in the Savikalpa or Bhavamukha state

15. "Remain in Bhavamukha". Its meaning

16. Dualism qualified non-dualism and non-dualism come one after another with the spiritual progress of the Sadhaka

17. Hanuman, a great knower of Brahman, on this topic

18. The state of non-duality is beyond speech, thought and imagination. As long as the functions of body and mind continue, one has to accept in practice both the aspects of God, the absolute (Nitya) and the relative (Lila)

19. A few examples given by the Master:

(1) the natural and reverse orders in the scale of music

(2) Vilva fruit

(3) the pith of a plantain plant

(4) coats of an onion

20. Although the state of Bhavamukha is a few steps below the Nirguna, there is a plenitude of the knowledge of the non-dual reality in that state, How one feels in that state. The Master is an example

21. One feels, “I am servant, devotee, child or a part”, when one comes down to a still lower state of the realm of Vidya Maya mentioned above

22. The Master dwelt for the rest of his life in the consciousness of the universal ripe I after his unripe I had been destroyed altogether. It is in this state that the mood of the spiritual teacher was manifested in him. It is therefore not impossible that the mood of the spiritual teacher and humility should be found in the same person in different states

23. The Master’s power of awakening spirituality in others by his mere will or touch An example—the event of January 1, 1886

24. What visions and experiences the devotees had at the touch of the Master

25. One never knew when the Master would mercifully touch any one that way

26. It is recorded in all the scriptures that on the merging or destruction of the “unripe” I, the mood of the spiritual Teacher is manifested

27. The mood of the Guru is not anything human, but the power of the divine Mother Herself manifesting through the human body and mind as instruments

28. God, out of compassion, removes ignorance and delusion of the human mind through spiritual teacher. Therefore, devotion to the spiritual teacher

and that to God are the same.

29. The Master's instruction regarding the devotion to the spiritual teacher: the story of Vibhishana's devotion to his Guru

30. When there is true devotion, one remembers God through the association of even a trifling thing. Sri Chaitanya had ecstasy immediately on saying, "Ah, drums are made of this earth"

31. Arjuna's devotion to the spiritual teacher

32. Although, as the power of God, all spiritual teachers are one, absolute faith in and unwavering devotion to one's own spiritual teacher are necessary. What Hanuman said about it

33. The power of the spiritual teacher is there, lying dormant, in all men

34. The Master's words— "The mind becomes the spiritual teacher at last"

35. "The spiritual teacher is, as it were, a woman-friend"

36. "The spiritual teacher merges at last in the chosen Ideal of the disciple. The three — Guru, Krishna and Vaishnava are One, and the One is the three"

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST MANIFESTATION OF THE MOOD OF THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER

1. "Fruits first, flowers next." This is the peculiar trait of all divine incarnations

2. The first manifestation of the mood of the spiritual teacher in the Master's life. A discussion on the scriptures in a meeting of Pandits at the house of the Lahas at Kamarpukur

3. A similar event in the life of Jesus in the temple of Jehovah at Jerusalem

4. The Jewish pilgrimage of those days

5. Jesus explained the scriptures in the temple of Jehovah

6. The refutation of the opinion of the great orientalist and scholar Max Muller

7. Why did the Master marry?

(1) at the request of relatives? No

(2) for enjoyment? No

(3) what the Master said when his relatives were in search of a bride. "Go and see, the bride is marked with a straw." Therefore his marriage was voluntary

(4) for experiencing the result of his actions done in previous births that had begun to fructify? No

(a) a man of absolute knowledge is free to experience his Prarabdha or not

(b) the case of the Master needs no mention; for his words are, "One who was Rama and Krishna is now Ramakrishna"

(c) the Master's joking about his marriage

(d) for completing the ten sanctifying ceremonies which the ordinary religious teacher must undergo to have the fullest experience of the world? No

8. The purpose of the Hindu marriage is to lead man through enjoyments not incompatible with religion to renunciation

9. Experiences with discrimination lead at the right moment to the knowledge, "Pleasure comes with a crown of thorns on its head"

10. The Master taught how to urge the mind to give up the pleasure of worldly enjoyments

11. The present national degradation of the Hindus is due to the non-observance of continence in married life

12. The Master married for reviving that ideal by following it himself

13. The Master's unprecedented relation of immaculate love with his wife. What the Holy Mother said about it

14. It is only to teach the married people that the Master enacted that play of love

15. We must form our married life after the ideal of the Master and observe continence at least partially. No good will otherwise come to us

16. A few objections to the fact that the Master had no physical relationship with his wife and their refutation

17. It is clear from the Holy Mother's worshipping the Master all her life as the universal Mother that his marriage took place under the impulsion of the mood of the spiritual teacher in him

CHAPTER V

THE MOOD OF THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER IN YOUTH

1. It is not by mere wish that man becomes a spiritual teacher or a leader
2. The unlimited "I" - ness, the origin of all consciousness of the phenomenal beings, is easily manifested in the spiritual teachers of the world, but it is not so with ordinary people
3. The time when it became perfectly manifested and natural to the Master
4. That mood at the time of his Sadhana—in his behaviour towards Rani Rasmani and Mathur
5. The strange nature of the Master
6. It was difficult for the wealthy and the learned to recognize the Master. The reasons for it
7. The Master's condition after his marriage. Mathur's attraction towards him and others' opinion of him
8. In the mood of the spiritual teacher the Master punished Rani Rasmani
9. Its result
10. Similar events in the lives of Sri Chaitanya, Jesus and Sri Krishna
11. The Master's strange method of teaching, when overwhelmed by the divine power manifested as the spiritual teacher, and the good fortune of Rani Rasmani
12. What the scriptures say about the characteristics of the mind merged in God
13. Why it is so difficult to understand the behaviour of the religious teachers of the people, specially that of Sri Ramakrishna

CHAPTER VI

THE MOOD OF THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER AND MATHURANATH

1. It takes a long time for a big flower to blossom

2. The strange relation of the Master with Mathur; the nature of Mathur as a man

3. The unconscious help rendered by Rani Rasmani and Mathur in the manifestation of the Master's power as the spiritual teacher. All persons connected either as enemies or as friends help the manifestation of the power of the incarnations of God

4. It is the same with ordinary human life; there is a great similarity between it and that of an incarnation of God

5. Though a devotee, Mathur was not foolish

6. Mathur's first attraction towards the Master— its cause and gradual development

7. The change of Mathur was due to the infectious power of devotion

8. Argumentation between the Master and Mathur with his modern education. The law of nature gets altered by the will of God. A red china-rose plant producing white flower

9. Mathur was compelled daily to discuss the Master's condition

10. Mathur and the Master's recital of the Mahimna stotra and his Bhavasamadhi

11. An example of how others could easily have spiritual progress in the company of the Master

12. Mathur's vision of Siva and Sakti at the same time in the Master

13. The result of this vision

14. The evidence of the scriptures regarding Mathur's great good fortune

15. Great manifestation in the Master, day after day, of the mood of the spiritual teacher and Mathur's feelings on testing him

16. The priest Haldar's conduct at seeing Mathur's increasing devotion to the Master

17. The pitiable fate of a pair of Varanasi shawls

18. The Master's non-attachment

19. What the priest Haldar did at last

20. Mathur's and his wife Jagadamba Dasi's devotion to the Master and the Master's relation with that family

21. Contrary moods co-existed in the Master
22. A meeting of the Pandits convened at Dakshineswar for getting a scriptural injunction about a broken image
23. The Master's decision and the last word on the matter

CHAPTER VII

GRACE BESTOWED ON MATHUR IN THE MOOD OF THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER

1. In the company of the Master, Mathur celebrated the worship of Mother Durga at his Janbazar house
2. The Master's Bhavasamadhi and personal beauty
3. Large gatherings of people at Kamarpukur on account of the Master's physical beauty
4. An incident regarding the Master's personal beauty and his humility
5. Jagadamba Dasi's cleverness in bringing to an end the Master's ecstasy
6. The manner of the Master's coming down from the state of Samadhi is in accordance with the scriptures
7. The Master fanned the Goddess Durga with a Chamara in the spiritual attitude of a woman friend
8. Unable to recognize the Master in that state, Mathur asked his wife
9. Vijaya, the tenth day of the bright fortnight of the lunar month of Aswin
10. Enjoying a divine bliss, Mathur was not conscious of the approaching moment of immersion
11. Mathur's determination not to immerse the image of the Mother
12. Mathur's reply to the persuasion
13. The Master persuaded Mathur
14. The strange power of the words and touch of the Master
15. How Mathur regained his normal consciousness
16. The firmness of Mathur's faith in the Master was the result of his having tested him
17. Mathur's desire of having ecstasy

18. He prayed to the Master for it

19. The Master dissuaded him by quoting the example of the Gopis and Uddhava

20. Mathur's ecstasy and his prayer to the Master

21. None but a man of renunciation can maintain Bhavasamadhi

22. An example of this—the story of a young devotee brought to the Kasipur garden

23. The Master's power of recognizing the changes brought about by an excess of spiritual emotions. The spiritual teacher is indeed "the physician of the world disease"

24. The Master's opinion on the condition of the young man

25. The Master used to speak out every thought frankly to Mathur and always sought his advice

26. How much the Master looked to Mathur's welfare

27. An example: The Master anxiously asked for and had the Prasada on the occasion of the worship of Phalaharini

28. On especial ceremonial occasions the Master used naturally to have especial Bhavasamadhis

29. What Swami Yogananda thought when he saw the Master thus demanding and receiving Prasada

30. The Master gave the reason why he did so

31. The wonderful relation between the Master and Mathur

32. How Mathur consoled the Master by speaking of the "worm generating lust"

33. The Master spoke to Mathur on the coming of his innercircle devotees

34. An example of the Master's boy-like nature: the incident of plucking the green Susni

35. Mathur took refuge in the Master in times of worldly dangers: an example

36. An example of the miserly Mathur's ungrudging expenditure of money

37. Other illustrations

38. Mathur served the poor at Vaidyanath at the wish of the Master

39. The relation of the Master with Mathur was determined by Providence: The Master spoke of Mathur's next birth, as he had a desire for enjoyment

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THE RELATION OF THE MASTER AS THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER WITH HIS OWN TEACHERS

1. The power of being a spiritual teacher is the especial possession of the incarnations of God

2. The Master was initiated by several teachers

3. The Bhairavi Brahmani

4. The Brahmani assisted the Master in Sadhana

5. The Brahmani's experience in the devotional moods recorded in the Vaishnava scriptures

6. Mathur was suspicious on seeing her beauty and accomplishments

7. The Brahmani's antecedents

8. The Brahmani, a spiritual aspirant of a high order

9. The Brahmani's Yogic vision

10. The story of Chandra, a disciple of the Brahmani

11. The attainment of the powers of miracles makes one fall from Yoga

12. Chandra met with his fall on attaining the power of performing the miracle

13. The story of Girija, another disciple of the Brahmani

14. Girija's power of performing a miracle

15. Chandra's and Girija's powers of performing miracles were destroyed by the Master as the spiritual teacher

16. Miraculous powers are obstacles on the path to the realization of God. The parable of crossing a river on foot

17. The increase of egoism due to the Miraculous powers: The Master's parable of an elephant, killed and brought back to life

18. The Brahmani did not realize the unqualified non-dual state of consciousness; proof of it

19. Definition of the “animal mode”, “hero mode”, and “divine mode” of the Tantras

20. Brahmani the “heroic” aspirant, had not even qualified herself for the “divine mode” of worship

21. The proof of it

22. The Brahmani became conscious of her spiritual want by the grace of the Master and went away to practise austerities

23. The story of the revered Tota Puri

24. The exchange of ideas between the Master and Tota Puri

25. The scriptures on the fearlessness and the freedom from bondage of the knowers of Brahman

26. The high state of Tota Puri

27. The fearlessness of Tota Puri; he saw the Bhairava

28. The story of Tota Puri’s teacher

29. What Tota Puri said about his teacher’s monastery and community

30. The antecedents of Tota Puri

31. Tota Puri’s mind

32. Tota Puri’s ignorance of the path of devotion

33. Proof thereof: What, are you fashioning Chapatis by clapping your hands?

34. What led to Tota’s giving up anger

35. Man cannot realize God till Maya moves away compassionately from his path

36. An example thereof. The story of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana travelling in the forest

37. Tota did not know that his high state was due to the grace of the divine Mother

38. Tota Puri’s illness

39. Tota disregarded the indication of his mind

40. Tota went to bid good-bye to the Master but was unable to do so. His illness increased

41. Unable to control the mind Tota went to give up his body in the Ganga; his vision of the divine Mother as the universe

42. Tota gave up his determination to die

43. Tota had, as the result of his illness, the knowledge that Brahman and the power of Brahman were one and the same

44. Tota accepted the divine Mother and left

45. Tota's knowledge of the art of converting baser metals into gold — alchemy

46. The conclusion

PART FOUR
AS THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER (II)

Preface

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VAISHNAVACHARAN AND GAURI

1. The ignorance of the people of Calcutta about the Master's relation as the spiritual teacher to the holy men and aspirants who came to Dakshineswar

2. "Bees come of themselves when flowers blossom." Fitness for imparting religion is necessary; preaching is otherwise vain

3. All are equally blind in respect of spiritual matters

4. How the Master preached religion

5. The state in which the Master was when he met the Brahmani

6. What others understood about the exalted state of the Master

7. Mathur's decision at Brahmani's request to convene a meeting of the Pandits well versed in scriptures, to discuss the Master's condition

8. Vaishnavacharan and Gauri of Indes were invited

9. How famous Vaishnavacharan then was

10. The Brahmani's prescription for curing the burning sensation in the Master's body

11. The Brahmani's prescription for curing the Master's inordinate hunger

12. These states arise as the result of the practice of Yoga. What we saw about that kind of hunger of the Master

13. The first example: he took a big piece of sar

14. Second example: he ate two pounds of sweets and parched rice at Kamarpukur

15. Third example: he ate about five pounds of boiled rice with a tiny Maurala fish of sauce

16. Fourth example: he ate two pounds of sweet pudding at midnight at Dakshineswar

17. Strong spiritual emotions changed the Master's body

18. The meeting of Pandits, when Vaishnavacharan came to Dakshineswar

19. A discussion about the Master's condition in that meeting

20. Vaishnavacharan's conclusion about the state of the Master

21. The Master's opinion about the sects like the Kartabhaja (the worshippers of the spiritual teacher) and the like

22. The kind of religion wanted by men full of worldly desires

23. The history of the origin of the Tantras and their novelty

24. The history of the "heroic mode" of worship entering into the Tantra

25. There are in each Tantra two strata, the high and the low

26. The new process of worship founded by the Vaishnava community of Bengal

27. From this Sadhana originated eventually the doctrines of Kartabhaja etc. The essence of all those doctrines

28. The method of the teaching of Sadhya (the object of realization) and Sadhana (the means of realization) according to the Kartabhaja and other doctrines

29. Vaishnavacharan took the Master to a private meeting of the Kachhibagan group to test him

30. Vaishnavacharan knew the Master to be an incarnation of God

31. The miraculous power of Pandit Gauri, the follower of the Tantras

32. Gauri worshipped his wife as the Devi

33. Gauri's strange process of offering oblations

34. A meeting including Vaishnavacharan and Gauri was convened at Dakshineswar. The Master in Bhavasamadhi rode on the shoulders of Vaishnavacharan who composed a hymn in praise of him

35. The conviction of Gauri about the Master

36. Detachment came on Gauri in the company of the Master; he renounced the world and went away to practise Tapas

37. While giving instruction, the Master would quote Vaishnavacharan and Gauri: faith in the Lila of God as a human being

38. Gauri on the knowledge of non-difference between Kali and Krishna

39. Vaishnavacharan on regarding the object of one's love as a form of the divine Lord

40. This instruction accords with the scriptures. The conversation in the Upanishad between Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi

41. The incarnations of God always abide by the authority of the Sastras. The teaching of the Master about paying respects to all religions

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1. How the Master met holy men

2. Holy men rest where they find it convenient to get water and secluded places for answering calls of nature

3. A story about it

4. Sadhus came to the Dakshineswar Kali temple because Bhiksha and secluded places were easily available there

5. Sadhus of different types came at different times

6. The Vedantic discussion of the Paramahamsas: “Existence-Knowledge-Bliss”

7. The high state of a certain Sadhu who realized the Bliss Itself

8. The Master saw a Sadhu inebriated with divine knowledge

9. The water of the Ganga and that in a drain appear as same when Brahman is realised. People see a Paramahamsa as a child, a ghoul or a mad man

10. The holy men of Ramawat denomination came to Dakshineswar

11. The story of the image Ramlala

12. What we thought when we heard of Ramlala from the Master

13. We are attached to modern science because it helps us to increase our enjoyment

14. The result of the Kapalikas preaching religion for selfish enjoyments during the latter part of the Buddhistic age. It is impossible for Yoga and Bhoga to co-exist

15. Worldly people’s fear at the extraordinary renunciation of the Master and his preaching of it

16. How Ramlala remained permanently with the Master

17. The “father” experienced selfless love in the divine company of the Master

18. The faith of a Sadhu in the name of Rama

19. The devotional songs and couplets of the holy men of the Ramawat community

20. A desire in the Master’s mind to supply all the necessities of Sadhana to the spiritual aspirants of all denominations. The story of Rajkumar (Achalananda)

21. The Master was switched to spiritual emotion and inebriation at the very mention of the word “hemp” or “wine” and entered into Samadhi at the utterance of what are regarded as obscene words or songs

22. Examples of this:

(i) at the house of Ramachandra Datta

(ii) Second example: in the presence of the Holy Mother at Dakshineswar

(iii) The third example: at Kasipur on seeing a drunkard

23. The Sadhus of all denominations that came to Dakshineswar got help from the Master in religious matters

24. Whenever the Master realized perfection in the Sadhana of a particular religious doctrine or faith, the Sadhus of that denomination would come to him

25. The manifestation of power in all the incarnations of God is not seen to be the same. For, some of them came to impart religion to a particular people, and some to all humanity

26. The comparison of the manifestation of spiritual power of the incarnations, the founders of Hindu, Jewish, Christian and Muslim religions on the one hand and that of the Master on the other

27. The reason why the Sadhus and Sadhakas of all denominations came to the Master

28. It is not true that the spiritual propensity in the Master got awakened by virtue of his company with the Sadhus who came to Dakshineswar

29. The loss of normal consciousness during the Master's Samadhi was not a disease. The conversation between the Master and Sivanath is a proof of it

30. The reason why the Master behaved like a mad man during the time of his Sadhana

31. Some of the Sadhakas that came to Dakshineswar were initiated by the Master. For example Sri Narayan Sastri

32. The antecedents of Sri Sastri

33. He finished that study and had the privilege of meeting the Master

34. Sastriji's resolve, owing to the divine company of the Master

35. Sastriji felt detachment

36. Sastriji was annoyed to speak with Michael Madhusudhan

37. The conversation between the Master and Michael

38. Sastriji wrote his own opinion on the wall

39. Sastriji was initiated in Sannyasa and practised austerities

40. It was natural with the Master to pay visit to monks and aspirants
41. The reason why the Nyaya philosophy entered Bengal
42. Padmalochan, the Vedantic scholar
43. An example of the wonderful genius of the Pandit
44. Who is the greater of the two, Siva or Vishnu?
45. The Pandit's love of God
46. The nature of the Master's mind; the Pandit came to Calcutta
47. The Pandit saw the Master for the first time
48. The reason why the Pandit's devotion and reverence increased
49. The Master could know the miraculous power of the Pandit
50. The Pandit passed away in Kasi, the abode of the universal Lord
51. The Master on Dayananda
52. Pandit Jayanarayan
53. Krishnakishore, the devotee

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2. What the Master has proved in his life and what the scope of his liberal doctrine will be in future
3. The proof thereof
4. How to understand the spread of the Master's ideas
5. The ideas and the ideals of the Master were first promulgated amongst the Sadhus of all communities, who came to Dakshineswar and who came in contact with him during his pilgrimage
6. Passing through various states, high and low, in his life and having various experiences, the Master had an extraordinary power of spiritual teaching manifested in him

7. What the Master learnt during his pilgrimage. Both natures, the divine and the human, were there in him

8. What the Sastras say about the reason why divine persons like the Master go on pilgrimage

9. The Master's advice to "chew the cud" after one visits temples and holy places

10. A devotional mood must be produced in the mind before one visits holy places

11. What the Master said to a devotee, anxious to visit Buddhagaya when Swami Vivekananda had gone there

12. "One who has it here, has it there also"

13. The thought in the mind of the simple-hearted Master as to what he would find in places of pilgrimage

14. The Master's instruction to Swami Yogananda. "You should be a devotee, but why should you be foolish on that account?"

15. Seeing the worldly attachment of the inhabitants of Kasi, the Master complained, "Why hast Thou brought me here, Mother?"

16. The Master's vision of "golden Kasi"

17. Why Kasi is regarded as made of gold

18. The Master felt that Kasi was golden and was therefore, afraid to make it dirty

19. The Master's vision at Manikarnika that Jivas are liberated as soon as they die in Kasi

20. The Master saw Trailanga Swami

21. The Master was in Bhavasamadhi to see the image of Vankavihari and pastures in Vrindavan

22. The Master's intense love for Vraja

23. Gangamata of Nidhuvan. The Master's desire to live there. He returned to Calcutta when he asked himself, who would serve his old mother

24. A wonderful harmony in the Master's life, of ideas and of qualities contrary to one another. Although a Sannyasin, the Master served his mother

25. The Master refused to go to Gaya, the abode of Gadadhar, knowing that he would be in Samadhi there and have to part with his body. The reason for this

26. It is the law that the effect merges in the cause

27. The law of Karma cannot solve the mystery of the life of an incarnation. The reason therefor

28. Conclusions drawn by Indian philosophers when they saw the signs of liberated persons manifested in incarnations from childhood. Incarnations belong, according to the Sankhya philosophy, to the class of persons "merged in Prakriti"

29. The Vedanta calls these persons the Adhikarikas or persons authorized. And according to it, there are, in this class of persons, two divisions, the incarnations of God and the eternally free Isvarakotis

30. The bodies and minds of Adhikarikas are made of materials different from those of ordinary people. This is why their desires and actions are also different from those of others and are so astonishing to us

31. The Master visited Navadwip

32. The previous opinion of the Master about Chaitanya, the great lord, and the change of that opinion after having his vision at Navadwip

33. The Master went to Kalna

34. The renunciation, devotion and fame of Bhagavan Das

35. Religious movements in India during the period of the Master's Sadhana

36. The Master went to the Harisabha at Kalutola

37. The reading of the Bhagavata in that Sabha

38. The Master occupied "the seat of Sri Chaitanya"

39. A commotion over it arose in the Vaishnava community

40. Bhagavan Das became annoyed to hear of the occupation of "the seat of Sri Chaitanya"

41. The Master went to the hermitage of Bhagavan Das

42. Hriday told the "father" about the Master

43. The "father" was annoyed at the action of a certain Sadhu

44. Bhagavan Das's egotism of teaching people

45. The Master in Bhavasamadhi protested against the annoyance and egotism of the "father"

46. The "father" accepted the truth of the Master's words

47. The loving conversation between the Master and Bhagavan Das. Mathur's service to the Sadhus of the hermitage

CHAPTER IV

AS THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER—CONCLUDED

1. The Vedas call a knower of Brahman all-knowing. We dispute about it without understanding the passage

2. The Master explained how those words were true. Press one grain of rice from the cooking pot and you know if all are boiled soft

3. To know a thing together with its origin and end is to know all about it. It is the same with the world on the realization of God

4. It is also true that a knower of Brahman has all his resolves fulfilled. Its meaning in the light of the Master's life. "I could not bring my mind to this 'cage of flesh and bone'."

5. The description of another event in the Master's life in order to explain this subject. "The mind is in a high plane: I cannot bring it down

6. The Master saw all persons and things in two different ways, from two different planes of consciousness: the plane of non-dual consciousness and that of the ordinary one. The first is the plane of supersensuous vision and the second of the sensuous

7. Ordinary men see everything in the second way

8. The example of the Master's two kinds of vision

9. The Master's words on this subject and his vision— Mother peeps through different sheaths, Mother has become the prostitute, Ramani, too

10. The Master's senses, mind and intellect were keener than those of ordinary persons. Non-attachment to enjoyment and pleasure was the cause of it. A contrast between the actions of minds attached and unattached

11. Examples of the keenness of the Master's mind

(a) His easy explanation of the Sankhya philosophy,— “the master and mistress of a house, where a marriage is being celebrated”

(b) Brahman and Maya are one; the same snake, motionless and in motion.

(c) Isvara is not bound by Maya; a snake has poison in its mouth but it does not die

12. The Master saw exceptional changes in nature and was convinced that God changed His law

13. Told of the lightning conductor the Master related his experience: “Iightning struck a hut beside a three storeyed house”

14. He saw a white china-rose flower on a red china-rose plant

15. From uncommon events in nature arose the conviction of the Master that the whole universe was the playground of the Mother of the universe

16. The Master knew from a higher plane of consciousness the amount of the power manifested and solidified, as it were, in any particular place

17. It is well known that Sri Chaitanya discovered the places of the sport of Sri Krishna at Vrindavan

18. Such events in the Master’s life in Bhavasamadhi. He had the vision of the former image of Mrinmayi at Vana-Vishnupur

19. The condition of the town of Vana-Vishnupur

20. Sri Madanamohan and Mrinmayi

21. The Master’s power of detecting the mental attitudes and aims of people: The first example

22. The second example of this. Swami Vivekananda and his fellow pupils who came to Dakshineswar

23. “One cannot become what one wishes to, even by making efforts”

24. The third example: in connection with the Master’s drinking water during his visit to Pandit Sasadhar

25. The nature of the Master’s mental constitution. The standard by which he judged all things and persons and ascertained their worth

26. An example of it— “I don’t want a learning that results in ‘the bundling of rice and plantain’ ”

27. Second example—his feeling as if some one tightened up all the joints of his body as soon as he sat for meditation and his vision of a person with a trident in hand

28. Third example: going to offer flowers at the lotus feet of the universal Mother, he placed them on his own head; and going to offer oblations of water to the forefathers, he was unable to do so

29. The spiritual experiences of the unlettered Master demonstrated the truths contained in the Vedas and other Sastras

30. The goal of human life is the attainment of the non-dual knowledge. In that state, "All jackals howl in the same way." With Sri Chaitanya devotion was like the tusks of an elephant which are seen, and the non-dual knowledge, like the inner teeth, which are not seen. Approach to non-dual knowledge was the standard by which the Master judged the high or low state of a man or a society

31. Visions knowable to oneself and those knowable to others also

32. The Master's mind could not rest till it arrived at reliable conclusions about the states of things and persons

33. What the Master saw in the normal plane of consciousness— the ill-will between the Saktas and the Vaishnavas

34. To remove that hatred from his own household he got them all intiated in the Mantra of Sakti

35. The origin of the custom of Sadhus prescribing and administering medicine, which led gradually to their spiritual degradation

36. The Master's opinion on Sadhus who merely put on the religious garb

37. The lives of true Sadhus breathe life into the Sastras

38. The Master noticed narrowness even in true Sadhus

39. The Master had an experience of this lack of spirituality in places of pilgrimage. What a great difference between our experience and that of the Master!

40. The Master came to know of his own liberal doctrine

41. The Master understood that he was the first in the world to realize the truth: "all faiths are true— as many faiths, so many paths"

42. The Master realized that the divine Mother had endowed him with extraordinary power in order that religion might be imparted to the world

43. The Master did not, as is the case with us, assume the position of the spiritual teacher under the influence of egotism

44. The proof thereof — the Master in Bhavamukha quarrelled with the Mother of the universe

45. The second example of it

46. The Master's realization: "Being an executive officer of the divine Mother's empire, I shall have to go to impose peace wherever troubles arise"

47. The Master's mind was eager to meet his devotees

48. The Master's conviction — all those who are living their last lives in the world will come "here"; those who even once have truly called on God cannot but come "here"

49. This conviction of the Master arose on account of his absolute dependence on the divine Mother

50. The meaning of these words of the Master

51. The concentrated state of the mood of the Guru is what is called the Divyabhava, the divine state, in the Tantras. How the Gurus established in the divine state initiate their disciples

52. The realizing of divine knowledge by the disciple as soon as he sees, touches and salutes the Guru is called the Sambhavi initiation. And the realization of that knowledge by the disciple on account of the power of the Guru entering his body is known as Sakti initiation

53. In that kind of initiation there in no need of discrimination between proper and improper time

54. The Master is the best of all spiritual teachers endowed with the divine mood. The reason thereof

55. All the powers are not always manifested in the incarnations of God. The proof thereof

56. The Master met Kesav Chandra, the great devotee. His own devotee came shortly after

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SRI RAMAKRISHNA IN THE COMPANY OF DEVOTEES FOR NINE DAYS: THE NAVAYATRA IN A.D. 1885

1. The harmony of the divine and human natures in the Master
2. Vijaykrishna Goswami's vision
3. What the devotees felt at the Master's extraordinary behaviour with them
4. Swami Premananda asked the Master importunately for Bhavasamadhi. The Master's anxiety and vision
5. The Master explained why he felt anxious for the devotees. When Hazra asked him not to be anxious for them he had a vision and replied to him accordingly
6. Swami Vivekananda asked the Master not to do so. The Master's vision and reply
7. The Master honoured persons of respectability and good qualities— its reason
8. To what length the Master went to free himself from egoism
9. The events concerning Dr. Kailas and Trailokya Babu are examples of the Master's lack of egoism
10. Worldly people behave in a contrary way
11. Religious movements about the time of the Master's birth. Their causes
12. Pandit Sasadhar came to Calcutta at that time. His exposition of religion
13. The Master's desire to see Sasadhar
14. The desire that arose in the pure mind of the Master was always fulfilled
15. The places where the Master went on the occasion of the Navayatra of the year 1885
16. About Ishan Babu
17. Swami Yogananda's devotion to established rites and practices
18. The Chariot festival at Balaram Babu's house
19. The women devotee's devotion to the Master

20. The Master walked along with indrawn mind and a woman devotee, who forgot herself, followed him

21. A few more examples of the Master's walking along with indrawn mind. Its reason

22. The Master invited the woman devotee to come to Dakshineswar

23. On the boat the Master replied to the woman devotee's question: "Be like a cast off leaf before the wind"

24. The Master reached Dakshineswar and was in Bhavasamadhi. The devotees got evidence that his divine body should not be touched by one with a sore in one's body

25. The vision of the coiled Power and his talk in ecstasy

26. The Master was anxious to think what the devotees who came would have for their meal. He sent the women devotees for shopping

27. The Master who had a boyish nature got afraid like a boy

28. Pandit Sasadhar saw the Master for the second time

29. The incident as described by the Master himself to a devotee

30. Man gains faith in such stories extant about other incarnations, when he sees the extraordinary behaviour of the Master

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1. Gopala's mother saw the Master for the first time

2. Govinda Chandra Datta of Pataldanga

3. His wife, a devotee

4. The family of her priest. Aghoramani, a child widow

5. Aghoramani's devotion to the established rites and practices

6. She lived in Govinda Babu's temple and practised penances

7. Different expressions and manifestations of spirituality in the women of the East and the west

8. Aghoramani met the Master a second time

9. The Master came to Govinda Babu's garden

10. The state of Aghoramani when she had the vision of the divine form of Gopala

11. In that state she came to the Master at Dakshineswar

12. The Master praised that state, describing it as hard to attain. He pacified her

13. The Master said to Gopala's mother: "You have attained everything"

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1. The festival of the return Chariot journey at Balaram Basu's house

2. The Master's desire to see the Sankirtan of Sri Chaitanya. His vision of the same. He saw Balaram Babu in that party

3. Balaram's service of God in many places. The food belonging to Balaram was pure

4. The Master's four suppliers of necessities. Balaram's privilege as regards the Master's service

5. The Master always said "here" and "of this place" instead of I and mine. Its reason

6. How and how long the suppliers served the Master

7. "All the members of Balaram's family are strung to the same tune"

8. The Car Festival in Balaram's house was an expression of love of God without pomp and grandeur

9. The wonderful relation of the Master with the women devotees

10. The Master spoke of Gopala's mother's vision to the women devotees and sent for her

11. In the afternoon the Master became suddenly filled with the spirit of Gopala and Gopala's mother arrived immediately after

12. Whatever the Master did under the influence of Bhava looked beautiful. The reason

13. The Master came back to Dakshineswar at the end of the festival

14. The Master was annoyed to see the bundle belonging to Gopala's mother. He was all love to the devotees, but was all discipline as well

15. Gopala's mother was pained by the Master's expression of annoyance. The Holy Mother consoled her

16. The nature of the visions of Gopala's mother after she was firmly convinced that the Master was her chosen Ideal

17. Marwari devotees came to the Master

18. The Master could not accept and eat things given to him with a motive; nor did he give them to the devotees to eat

19. The Master gave Gopala's mother the candy given by the Marwaris

20. No one should be told of one's vision

21. The Master introduced Gopala's mother to Swami Vivekananda

22. Invited by Gopala's mother the Master went to the Kamarhati garden and saw a ghost there

23. The Master fed Gopala's mother with thickened milk at the Kasipur garden and said, "Gopala eats through her mouth"

24. Gopala's mother saw the universe as the form of God

25. Gopala's mother at the Baranagar monastery

26. Gopala's mother with western women

27. Gopala's mother at Sister Nivedita's house

28. The passing away of Gopala's mother

29. The story of Gopala's mother concluded

APPENDIX

THE HUMAN ASPECT OF THE MASTER

1. The generality of people have reverence for Sri Ramakrishna only because they hear of his Yogic powers

2. Though all this is true, our aim is not to discuss this subject: for selfish devotion is harmful to progress

3. Real devotion will make the worshipper similar to the worshipped

4. The extraordinary things we become acquainted with, by a study of the life of an incarnation

5. The village of Kamarpukur, the birth-place of Sri Ramakrishna

6. The wonderful behaviour of the boy Ramakrishna

7. His search for truth

8. The result of the search for truth

9. The deep meaning of the simple words of Sri Ramakrishna

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THE MASTER IN THE DIVINE MOOD AND NARENDRANATH

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5. Why the Master asked the Brahmos to take his words as far as they appeared practicable to them
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7. The Master taught the Brahmos that God could not be made one's own when one was conscious of His powers
8. "Don't set a limit to the Lord's nature"
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10. To what extent the Master considered Kesav to be his own
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13. The story of the fight of Siva and Rama removed the misunderstanding between Kesav and Vijay
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4. The extraordinary Sankirtan in Mani Mallick's house
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2. He came to know how far the influence of the Western ideas and ideals had changed the outlook on life of the people of India
3. They would not accept the direct experiences of the seers of India, without comparing them with the teachings of Western scholars
4. Knowing that it happened by the will of the Mother, the Master remained unperturbed
5. What the Master did when he found the Brahmos unable to accept the knowledge of Brahman in its entirety

6. The minds of the people of Calcutta were attracted towards the Master through the Brahmos. Ram and Manomohan came and took refuge in the Master

7. A wonderful vision of the Master. Rakhal came

8. The boyish nature of Rakhal

9. Rakhal's wife

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11. The Master scolded Rakhal

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3. The Master invited Narendranath to come to Dakshineswar

4. Narendra refused to get married. His first visit to Dakshineswar

5. What the Master thought of Narendra

6. The Master's eagerness to see Narendra

7. What Narendra said of the Master's talk and behaviour on that occasion

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9. Narendra's impression of the Master during his first visit: he was a monomaniac but one who had indeed renounced his all for the sake of God

10. Practice of religion at that time by Narendra

11. He used to visit the Brahmo Samaj

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13. Narendra’s natural inclination for meditation
14. The growth of that inclination on the advice of Maharshi Devendranath
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21. How cleverly he secured permission to go on board the ship Syrapis
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27. Narendra was absorbed in meditation on his way to Raipur
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3. Narendra's endeavour to find out the cause of that perception, and not to be overwhelmed in that way in future

4. Narendra thought variously of the Master and resolved to understand him properly

5. The Master behaved towards Narendra like one long familiar with him

6. Narendra's third visit

7. Narendra lost normal consciousness at the touch of the Master in ecstasy

8. The Master put many questions to Narendra in that state

9. The Master's wonderful vision about Narendra

10. Narendra's conviction about the Master—as the result of his wonderful direct experience

11. The consequent change of Narendra's conception of the Guru

12. Narendra grew in renunciation and detachment in the company of the Master

13. Narendra resolved not to accept anything said by the Master without testing it

14. Narendra's conduct since then

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(1) He saw a light before falling asleep

(2) Sometimes, coming to a certain place or in contact with some thing or person, he used to feel he had already known them

2. Narendra's direct experience of the Master's divine powers. His reflection on and wonder at them

3. How great was Narendra's fitness for spirituality

4. How far the Master was attracted to Narendra

5. The Master's attempt to give Narendra the knowledge of Brahman on the very first day

6. The difference between Narendra's wonderful experiences of the first and of the second day

7. The Master's apprehension about Narendra

8. The reason of the Master's extraordinary attraction for Narendra

9. This attraction was but natural and inevitable

10. The Master's love for Narendra was not of the worldly type

11. Swami Premananda's testimony to that love

12. Swami Premananda came for the first time to Dakshineswar and found the Master's solicitude for Narendra

13. What Premananda thought when he saw the terrible anxiety of the Master throughout the night

14. What Vaikunthanath said of the Master's love for Narendra

15. Although an especial object of the Master's love, Narendra remained unmoved; this demonstrates his uncommon fitness for spirituality

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2. Five kinds of behaviour of the Master towards Narendra during this period

3. The Master's faith and love for Narendra were born of his wonderful visions

4. The reason why the Master tested Narendra

5. How the Master looked upon Narendra

6. The erroneous impression of the ordinary people about Narendra

7. The author heard Narendra's praise form the Master

8. The author's erroneous impression about Narendra at his first meeting with him

9. The author’s first meeting with Narendra at a friend’s house
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11. Narendra’s talk on literature with the friend
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13. The Master recognized Narendra from the beginning
14. Knowing that Narendra was a highly fit person, the Master praised him publicly
15. What the Master said about the inherent powers of Narendra
16. Narendra’s protest against those words of the Master
17. Overwhelmed by Narendra’s power of argumentation the Master asked the Mother of the universe
18. An example: The Master came to the General Brahmo Samaj to see Narendra
19. The result of his coming there
20. They put out the gas lights to break up the crowd
21. Narendra took the Master out somehow and escorted him to Dakshineswar
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4. Narendra made progress on account to the Master’s love for him and surrendered himself to him
5. The Master made Sri M. argue with Narendra
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7. Kedar’s power of reasoning. He was introduced to Narendra

8. Asked by the Master, Narendra gave his own opinion about Kedar

9. Narendra scolded Rakhal for worshipping God with form. Rakhal was afraid. They were reconciled by the Master

10. The Master attempted to lead Narendra to the doctrine of non-dualism. Narendra's protests

11. Pratapchandra Hazra

12. Narendra was pleased with Hazra's intellectual capacity

13. How the Master behaved during Narendra's visits to Dakshineswar

14. Narendra joined Hazra in ridiculing the truth of non-dualism. The Master touched Narendra in a mood of spiritual inebriation

15. As a result, Narendra had a wonderful experience

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6. The wonderful knowledge of the Master in this respect

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14. He observed every action of the devotees who came to him

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17. One should know that the aim of life is God realization and nothing else and should orientate one's activities towards that

18. Sincere faith in God and foolishness are two different things. One must have discrimination between the real and the unreal

19. The Master's teaching to persons of different temperaments regarding mildness and harshness

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21. A different instruction to Niranjan under similar circumstances

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25. The Master observed the daily trifling actions of persons and gave instruction accordingly

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29. The first example of this: The devout Purnachandra and "the kidnapping teacher"

30. The Master was pleased to see Purna; he spoke of his high spiritual fitness

31. The Master's loving behaviour towards Purna

32. The Master's eagerness to see Purna. At the time of his second meeting with Purna he asked him the question "What's your idea about me? Who am I?"

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5. Narendra's vacillation as to which method, the Eastern or the Western, was to be adopted for realizing the truth
6. Narendra kept his resolve of attaining God, the ultimate truth and accepted only the beneficial aspects of the Western approach
7. Narendra's faith in the existence of God was at this time protected by his Guru's grace and his own wonderful visions
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3. Every member of Narendra's household was afraid that he would become a monk by moving with Sadhus
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7. At Baranagar Narendra heard the news of the sudden death of his father

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9. Narendra's description of that condition— search for a job, contempt shown by his rich acquaintances

10. Grinding poverty

11. Temptation by women

12. His mother scolded him for repeating the name of God

13. Atheism due to the wounded feeling

14. All the devotees believed in Narendra's fall; but the Master remained unmoved

15. Gnawing unrest

16. Narendra gained peace on account of an extraordinary vision

17. His resolve to become a monk. The Master's extraordinary behaviour with him at Dakshineswar

18. At the Master's request he gave up his resolve of leaving home for good

19. He thought of removing the poverty of the family with Providential help and requested the Master importunately for this. The Master asked him to go to the Kali temple and prey for it

20. Narendra had the vision of the divine Mother and forgot the universe

21. Thrice he went to the Kali temple to pray for the removal of poverty and each time he prayed for Viveka etc.

22. Narendra got faith in the worship of God in symbols and images. Great was the joy of the Master at this

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Footnote

* (a) A page from a poem Sri Ramakrishna copied by hand; (b) “Victory to Radha, love personified. Naren will teach loudly inside and outside (India). Victory to Radha.” (c) Sri Gadadhara Chattopadhyaya, Kamarpukur Village.

PART ONE

SRI RAMAKRISHNA
THE GREAT MASTER

HISTORIC BACKGROUND AND EARLY LIFE

PREFACE

By the grace of God, the First Part of *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master* is now published. It contains a detailed account of the early life of Sri Ramakrishna and the purpose of his advent. An attempt is made herein to present to the reader the mental picture we have formed through hearing from various people a number of unrelated incidents from the Master's life at that time. Although persons like Hridayram Mukhopadhyaya, Ramlal Chattopadhyaya and others gave as much help as they could for ascertaining the correct dates of certain events, there still remains, in places, some doubt on such points. They could not produce the horoscopes of Sri Ramakrishna's father, his elder brother and other near relatives; but they gave instead the approximate dates of certain events connected with the Master's life, saying, for example: "At the time of Sri Ramakrishna's birth his father was sixty-one or sixty-two year's old"; "Ramkumar, his eldest brother, was his senior by thirty-one or thirty-two years"; and so on.

Nevertheless the reader will be convinced, when he reads the fifth chapter of this part, "A Great Soul Is Born", that there is no doubt regarding the date of the birth of Sri Ramakrishna as recorded therein. We have been reassured about this and many other events recorded in this book by the Master's own words, some of which were heard by the author himself. It is to the Master, therefore, that we are beholden for this information. When we first set about describing certain periods of his life, it seemed impossible for us to narrate the events of his childhood and youth in such a detailed and connected way. Realizing, therefore, that it is by the grace of the Lord, who "makes the dumb wax eloquent and the lame nimble enough to cross a mountain", that this has become possible, we bow down to Him again and again.

It may also be said, in conclusion, that if the reader, after finishing this part of the book, goes through the other parts, namely, "As the Spiritual

Aspirant" and "As the Spiritual Teacher (I & II)", he will find the history of the Master's life recorded chronologically from the date of his birth to the year 1881.[1]

Sri Ramakrishna

Sri Ramakrishna (Studio Photo)

Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi

Footnote

1. Later another volume, “The Master in the Divine Mood, and Narendra Nath” was added to bring the Life up to 1886.—Tr.

INTRODUCTION

1. Spirituality is the pivot of life in India

When we make a comparative study of the spiritual beliefs and ideals of India and of other countries, we notice a vast difference between them. From very ancient times India has taken the entities beyond the senses, like God, the self, the next world, etc., to be real, and has employed all its efforts to their direct realization, with the result that it has made their immediate experience or direct knowledge the final goal of the national as well as the individual endeavour. All its activities have accordingly been coloured by intense spirituality throughout the ages.

2. The frequent birth of great souls in India is its cause

When we seek out the source, of this absorbing interest in things beyond the senses, we find that it is due to the frequent birth in India of men possessing a direct knowledge of these things and endowed with divine qualities. India came to acquire a firm faith in their extraordinary visions and unique manifestations of power, and became deeply interested in them, because it always had an opportunity to witness and discuss them. Its national life was thus established from very ancient times on the solid foundation of spirituality; and keeping its gaze firmly fixed on this, it brought into existence a society of unique customs and practices, which enabled its individual members to attain the ultimate object of God-realization in a most natural manner through the performance of their daily duties according to their special tastes and qualities. As these rules and regulations have been followed generation after generation, the spiritual ideas of India are still alive and vigorous. In consequence, men and woman have, even today, a strong conviction that with the help of austerity, self-

control and intense yearning everyone can have a direct vision of God, the Cause of the universe, and become forever united with Him.

3. The religion of India is founded on direct realization of God

That the religion of India is founded on God-vision becomes clear when we reflect upon the significance of words and expressions like Rishi (seer), Apta (one who has attained the goal of life), Adhikari (one possessed of authority), Prakriti-lina Purusha (a person merged in the cause of the universe), etc. These names have been used since Vedic times to describe the teachers who came to re-establish religion. It is beyond doubt that such men were designated by these names because they had given proof of their unique powers, acquired as a result of direct knowledge of the reality beyond the senses. This statement holds good in the case of every one of them, from the Rishis of the Vedic period to the divine incarnations of the Puranic (Epic) Age.

4. The origin and development of the idea of the divine incarnation: Isvara as the controller of a cycle is found in the Sankhya philosophy

It does not take one long to understand that certain Rishis of the Vedic period came to be recognized during the Puranic period as incarnations. In the Vedic period it was understood that certain persons had the power to perceive the reality beyond the senses, but not that they possessed different degrees of that power. People were content to call all of them “Rishis”. In course of time, however, as their intelligence and sense of discrimination became keener, they realized that not all the Rishis were endowed with the same degree of power. In shedding light on the spiritual world, some of them shone like the sun, some like the moon, some again, like bright stars, and others like ordinary fire-flies. They then began to classify the Rishis, and in so doing found that some of them were endowed with especial powers for manifesting spiritual truths or possessed these powers pre-eminently. Thus, in the Philosophic Age, some Rishis came to be known as Adhikari-Purushas (persons of authority). Even Kapila, the founder of the Sankhya philosophy, who was sceptical regarding the existence of God, had

to accept the existence of these Rishis; for he could not doubt what he actually saw. Accordingly, Kapila and his followers, in their writings, put these "Adhikari Purushas" in the class of those "merged in Prakriti". Searching for the cause of the advent of these uniquely powerful persons, the Sankhya philosophers came to the conclusion that, endowed with good qualities, such as purity, self-control, etc., they had acquired infinite knowledge, but that an intense desire to do good to the people had prevented them, for a time, from being merged in the real nature of the Self of infinite glory. Plunged, instead, into the all-powerful Prakriti, by virtue of that desire, they had come to know its powers to be their own; and, possessing the special powers, they did good to men in an infinite number of ways for one cycle, and at last became completely identified with the Self.

5. The all pervading Personal God during the Age of Devotion

The Sankhya teachers have, again, divided the "persons merged in Prakriti", according to the difference in their powers, into two classes: "Kalpaniyamaka Isvara" (ruler for one cycle) and "Isvarakotis" (those within the orbit of the former).

After the Philosophic Age, came a period when love for the divine was especially developed. At that time, through the overwhelming influence of Vedanta, people came to believe in an Isvara, an all-pervading Person, the aggregate of all beings. They acquired also the strong faith that Knowledge and Yoga could be had to the fullest degree by meditation on Him with single-minded devotion. And they soon came to believe that Isvara, in His capacity as ruler for a cycle, was either a partial or a full manifestation of the all-pervading Personal Isvara who is by nature eternally pure, eternally awake and eternally free. Thus the belief in the doctrine of God-incarnate arose in the Puranic Age, and those Rishis of the Vedic Age who possessed unique and extraordinary qualities began to be known as incarnations. It was the advent of persons endowed with such qualities that made people gradually believe in the existence of incarnations. Founded on the supersensuous visions and experiences of these persons, the unshakable edifice of religion gradually rose, like the snow-capped Himalayas, to reach

the sky. Because these persons had achieved the highest goal of life, they were called “Aptas”, and their words, expressing the highest knowledge, came to be known as the Vedas.

6. The worship of the spiritual teacher (Guru) is another reason for the belief

Another reason for accepting certain Rishis as incarnations was the practice of worshipping the spiritual teacher (Guru). In India, from the time of the Vedas and the Upanishads, men and women worshipped the teacher, the giver of spiritual knowledge, with great reverence. This worship, combined with meditation, convinced them in course of time that no man could occupy the position of a spiritual teacher till the divine, super-conscious power manifested itself in him. At first they looked upon and worshipped the Guru as belonging to a different and higher type of humanity, because they found that, in contrast with the selfishness of the ordinary human being, the true teacher did good to the people out of pure compassion and without any selfish motive. Later, through faith, reverence and devotion, they perceived directly in the Guru the manifestation of the divine power, and this convinced them more and more of his divine attributes. They had prayed for so long a time to the gracious Lord, imploring Him to “protect them with His compassionate face” (*Rudra yat te dakshinam mukham, tena mam pahi nityam*)[1] that their prayer was granted at last; and the compassion of the Lord stood revealed before them in the person of the Guru.

7. The doctrine of God-incarnate is founded on the knowledge gained from the Vedas and through Samadhi

When men had proceeded thus far in the worship of the Guru, it did not take them long to identify him—through whom the special Lila (play) of the divine power was being manifested—with the knowledge-giving, benign form of the divine Lord. Thus it seems that the continued worship of the Guru strengthened the idea of God-incarnate. As already mentioned, the doctrine of incarnation actually dates from the Puranic Age, but the idea

itself originated in the Vedic Age. The experience of the attributes, actions and nature of Isvara, during the ages of the Vedas, Upanishads and Darsanas (Philosophical systems), appears to have gradually assumed a more definite shape and then given rise to the belief in the doctrine of God-incarnate, it may also be that in the age of the Upanishads, Rishis, coming down by the reverse process from the state of Samadhi achieved by the path of "not this", "not this", through self-control, austerity, etc., realized that the whole universe was actually the manifestation of the unqualified (Nirguna) Brahman. It was only then, perhaps, that they acquired devotion to the all-pervading Brahman with attributes (Saguna), called Isvara, and began to worship Him. Having thus obtained a clear idea of Isvara's qualities, actions, nature, etc., they might have become convinced of the possibility of His being manifested in a special way.

8. The experiences of God's compassion spreads the idea of God incarnate in the Puranic Age

It was in the Puranic Age, then, that belief in the existence of incarnations was especially developed. Notwithstanding various defects in the development of spirituality in that age, it was faith in the glory of God-incarnate that made it really great. This belief in the existence of the incarnation also enabled men to comprehend the eternal play of the Saguna Brahman. As a consequence they realized that God, the Cause of the universe, was their only guide in the spiritual world; and they were convinced that the infinite compassion of the divine Lord would never let them to be doomed, however reprobate they might be, but that the Lord would in every age take form as an incarnation, discover new paths suited to man's nature and make Self-realization easy for him.

9. The essence of what the Sastras say about the divine nature of the incarnation

It will not be out of place to give here a brief summary of the essential ideas recorded in the Smritis and Puranas about the birth, action, etc. of the divine incarnation, who is by nature eternally pure, awake and free. Unlike

a Jiva (mortal being), he never gets entangled in or bound by his actions, for, content in the Atman from his very birth, no selfish idea of worldly enjoyment arises in his mind, as it does in the case of a Jiva. His whole life is dedicated to the good of others. Being always free from the meshes of Maya, he retains the memory of his previous lives.

10. The incarnation's unbroken memory

It may be asked: Does he have that unbroken memory from childhood? The Puranas reply: Although latent within him, it is not always manifest during his childhood. But as soon as his body and mind mature, he becomes aware of it with little or no effort. This applies to all of his actions. Since he assumes a human body, he has to behave in all respects like a human being.

11. Incarnations give new shape to religion

As soon as the body and mind of the incarnation fully develops, the aim of his life is revealed to him. He then realizes that the sole purpose of his coming is to re-establish religion; and whatever aids are necessary to fulfil that purpose come of themselves in an unexpected way. He walks in light where others grope in darkness; fearless, he attains his goal and beckons to men to follow in his footsteps. Untrodden paths leading to the realization of Brahman beyond Maya, and of Isvara, the cause of the universe, are discovered by him again and again, from age to age.

12. The time and circumstances of the coming of incarnations, as stated in the Sastras

The authors of the Puranas did not merely analyse the actions and characteristics of the incarnation; they also came to a definite conclusion regarding the occasion of his coming to the earth. With the passage of time, the eternal universal religion declines and, deluded by the inscrutable powers of Maya, men spend their lives thinking that the world and its pleasures are all-important. Eternal verities like the Self, Isvara, liberation, etc., are looked upon as dreamland imaginings of poets of a bygone age

steeped in delusion and darkness. But when men at last discover that no amount of wealth and worldly enjoyment, obtained by fair means or foul, can fill the void in their hearts, and when the waves of a shoreless black sea of despair overwhelm them, they cry out in the anguish of their hearts for deliverance. It is then that, out of His innate compassion for weak humanity, God incarnates Himself and frees from the accumulated encrustations of ages the eternal religion, which then shines like the eclipsed moon freed from Rahu.[1] Then, taking hold of man's hand, He sets him on the path of religion. An effect is never produced without a cause, nor does Isvara assume a body in His Lila till a universal need demands it. When such a want becomes overwhelmingly felt in every part of society, the infinite mercy of the Lord becomes, as it were, crystallized, and He appears as the spiritual teacher of the world. This is the conclusion that the authors of the Puranas have arrived at after witnessing the repeated appearances of incarnations.

13. The advent of the incarnation in the modern age

It is the necessity of the age, then, that calls forth an incarnation of God, the all-knowing teacher of the world, who throws new light on religion. The land of India which has always been conducive to the practice of religion and spirituality, has become holy and sanctified by bearing upon its bosom the footprints of incarnations again and again throughout the ages. All-powerful incarnations have appeared in India, even up to the present time, whenever the necessity for them has arisen. It is well known how, a little more than four hundred years ago, the shining example of Bhagavan Sri Chaitanya[1] made people lose themselves in esctasy in singing the name of Hari. Has such a time recurred? Did India, shorn of its glory and reduced to an object of contempt to foreigners, once again arouse the compassion of the Lord to incarnate Himself? That this has happened will become clear on a perusal of the life-story of the great soul, possessed of an infinite urge to do good, which is here recorded. India has once more been blessed by the coming, in response to the need of the age, of One who, incarnating Himself as Sri Rama, Sri Krishna and others, renewed the eternal religion again and again.

Footnote

1. *Svetasvatara Upanishad,* 4. 21.

1. A demon in Hindu Mythology, said to cause the eclipse by swallowing the sun or moon.

1. His full name was Sri Krishna-Chaitanya Bharati.—Tr.

CHAPTER I
THE NEED OF THE AGE

1. The power and progress of man in modern times

Even the simplest person can see how far, with the help of education, wealth and self-effort, mankind is progressing at present in every field. It seems as if man refuses to set a limit to his advance in any department of life. Not satisfied with travelling on land and water, he has invented a new machine to fly in the sky; he has satisfied his curiosity by going down to the bottom of the sea and by exploring seething volcanoes; he has scaled mountains covered with perpetual snow, crossed the seas and observed accurately the mysteries of the various regions of the world; he has discovered a life, common with his own, pulsating in creepers, plants and trees. He extends his knowledge by subjecting all beings to his observation and experimentation. Achieving control over the five elements— earth, water, fire, air and ether—he has become acquainted with innumerable facts relating to this earth of ours. Still unsatisfied, he is eager to discover the secrets of distant stars and planets and is already successful to some extent in his quest. There is also no lack of effort on his part to investigate the laws of the inner life; by experiment and research he continually discovers new truths in that domain. He has reached the conclusion that one species of beings evolves into another and that the mind consists merely of subtle matter, and therefore has a beginning and an end. He is now assured that as in the external, so also in the internal world, every event is regulated by an inviolable law; and he is now familiar with the subtle laws governing irrational mental impulses, like the urge to commit suicide. Again although he has no positive evidence regarding the survival of the individual, the study of history has convinced him that the national life not only continues but also evolves. Thus, finding the fulfilment of the individual life in that of

the nation, he wages perpetual war against ignorance with the aid of science and co-operative undertakings in order to achieve success in this regard. Imagining that, given unending struggle, he can discover the most hidden regions of the external and internal worlds and can achieve eternal progress, he has launched the boat of his life on a current of endless desires.

2. The centre of this power and progress in the west: it spreads to the East

Although this expansion of life originated chiefly in the West, a good deal of its influence is noticeable in India and other Eastern countries. As science daily brings East and West closer to each other, the Eastern outlook on life is gradually undergoing a change and conforming more and more to the Western pattern. This becomes clear from a study of the history of Persia, China, Japan, India and other Oriental countries. For better or for worse, Western thought has had, beyond any doubt, an influence on the East. It appears that the whole world will, in course of time, be pervaded by Western ideas.

3. The consequences of this progress are to be ascertained in the light of the western way of life

For an answer to the question whether this expansion of life has brought about good or bad results, we must go particularly to the West, where we shall also discover its source and nature. Such an investigation will show us how far the early ideas of the West have progressed or deteriorated, and whether there has been a loss or gain in man’s happiness. When this has once been ascertained regarding the individual and the nation in the West, the same process can, without difficulty, be extended to other countries, provided the time factor and the prevailing conditions are taken into account.

4. The cause and course of this progress in the West

History has recorded, in very clear terms, that from ancient times the severe cold in the dominant Western countries made men intensely body-conscious. This made them selfish. At the same time they realized that their selfish interests were best served by united effort, which in turn made them patriotic. This self-interest and patriotism led them, in course of time, to conquer other nations with great daring and rob them of their wealth. The struggle for existence then became easier, and gradually men acquired the capacity to look into themselves, which made them seek learning and the nobler qualities. They felt more and more drawn towards these higher pursuits beyond the mere struggle for existence. But now they encountered obstacles. Religious belief and a bigoted priesthood stood in the way of further progress. The priests did not merely utter threats condemning men to hell if they acquired such learning; they went further, and actually employed fraud, force and stratagem to prevent them from proceeding along that path. But the Westerners, being accustomed to pursuing their own self-interest, did not take long to find out how to overcome the priests' opposition. They pressed forward, forcibly removing the priests from their path. Rejecting the scriptures and denouncing religion as well as the priests, they began to guide their life along a new channel, and made it a principle not to believe or accept anything that could not be perceived by the senses.

Holding that truth can be ascertained only by the direct evidence of the senses backed by reasoning, inference, etc., the West henceforward began to worship objective matter. Thinking that the subject, perceived as the "I-consciousness", belonged likewise to the category of matter, it therefore proceeded to investigate the nature of that consciousness also by the method of perception, of which we have already spoken. Thus, for the last four hundred years, men in the West have accepted only those things in the universe which could be investigated through the five senses. Within that period physical science outgrew the mistakes and limitations of its infancy and entered upon its youth characterized by energy, optimism, enthusiasm and love of power.

5. Ignorance of the knowledge of the Atman: the resulting dissatisfaction

Although capable of achieving great progress in physical science, the procedure just mentioned could not lead men to the knowledge of the Atman. For, the only way to attain that knowledge is through self-control, selflessness and introspection, and the only instrument for attaining it is the mind with all its functions brought under absolute control. It is therefore not surprising that, being attracted only by external objects, they missed the path to Self-knowledge and identifying themselves with the body became materialists. That is why they regard worldly enjoyment all-important and make a special effort to obtain it. Their knowledge of material things, acquired through science, has been applied chiefly to that end and has made them more and more selfish and conceited. Therefore we find in the West a social system based on wealth. We also find there death-dealing weapons, deep-rooted discontent due to poverty side by side with abounding prosperity, and unquenchable thirst for wealth, the occupation and oppression of other countries, and so on. Because of all this, the hankering of the soul is not satisfied; even the belief in the survival of the nation after the death of the individual brings no happiness. After careful thought, certain people in the West have at last come to realize that the knowledge obtained through the senses will not enable them to discover the reality beyond time and space. Science gives them a fleeting indication of its existence, but nothing more; for that reality is beyond its reach and understanding. A feeling of utter helplessness has come over men and there is a growing lament in their hearts, because of the overthrow of that God on whom they depended for all their strength and power, and through whose grace they enjoyed splendour and prosperity.

6. If the East wants to ‘progress’ like the West, it has to cultivate selfishness and a passion for sense-pleasures

Thus a study of history shows that Western civilization is founded on self-love, desire for worldly possessions and absence of faith in religion. Should therefore an individual or a nation wish to achieve the results obtained by the West, he or it must build on that foundation. That is the reason why Japan and other Oriental countries which have modelled their national life entirely after the West cannot, with all their love of country and

nation, escape these evils. This is the unfortunate result of being inspired by Western ideals, as will become clear by a study of Indian life after it came in contact with the West.

7. Foundation of the ancient national life of India

The first question that may be asked is whether India ever had any national life before it came in contact with the West. The answer is that, although it was not there in name, it undoubtedly existed in fact. For even in those days the people of India as a whole venerated the Guru, the Ganga, the Gayatri and the Gita; and "Go" (the cow) was worshipped everywhere. Ideas from the *Ramayana,* the *Mahabharata* and other religious books inspired and guided the life of every man, woman and child; and Sanskrit, the "language of the gods", was the common medium of expression for the learned. There were many other similar factors of unity, and there is no doubt that religious ideas and religious practice constituted the bed-rock of that unity.

8. Founded on religion, the society of India never ran after worldly enjoyments

Religion, the basis of the national life in India, made her civilization unique. The chief characteristic of this civilization was self-control, which regulated both individual and national conduct. "Through pleasure, beyond pleasure" was the maxim of every Hindu in his journey through this life, which was looked upon as only a preparation for the life to come. Reminded of this high ideal at every stage of the individual or national life, a Hindu could not lose sight of it. He was forced, so to say, to keep himself always oriented towards this grand goal. It is for this reason that the caste or class system did not for a long time create any conflict of interests, and prevented the growth of discontent in society; for when anyone could achieve supreme knowledge or liberation by the unselfish performance of his own caste or class duties, irrespective of his birth, high or low, what could possibly be his cause for discontent? Contrary to what happened in Western society which is based on the right to equal opportunities for

enjoyment, there was no dissatisfaction among social groups in ancient Indian society, based as it was on the equal right and opportunity to achieve the highest ideal, namely, supreme knowledge or liberation. The changes that have occurred in the national life of India since, and as a result of, its contact with the West are discussed below.

9. The occupation of India by the West and its result

It was natural and inevitable that the occupation by the West should bring about many changes in the distribution of the national wealth in India. But the influence of the West went farther. It produced a radical change in the deep-rooted convictions which had guided men and women from times immemorial. As a result, the impression grew that the doctrine, "Enjoy to renounce"— *i.e.,* the aim of enjoyment is ultimately to renounce everything —was an empty tale invented by self-seeking priests; that the idea of survival after death was but a poet's fancy; and that no rule could be more unjust and unreasonable than that a man should be condemned to remain all his life in the stratum of society where he was born. Coming more and more under the spell of the West, India rejected the ideal of renunciation and self-control and began to run after worldly pleasures. This attitude brought with it the decay of the ancient system of education and training, and there arose atheism, love of imitation, and lack of self-confidence. Thus the nation lost its backbone. People came to believe that their long-cherished beliefs and practices were erroneous, and they felt that perhaps their traditions were crude and semi-civilized, as the West with its wonderful knowledge of science declared them to be. Blinded by the desire for enjoyment, India forgot her ancient culture and glory. The loss of that memory confused her understanding, and the national existence itself was at stake. Finding that, even for worldly enjoyment, she had to depend on others, India was overcome with a sense of frustration. Having thus lost the way both to enjoyment and to liberation, and yet being bent on imitating others, the nation was now buffeted by waves of desires, like a boat drifting without a helmsman.

10. The attempt to revitalize India in imitation of the West, and its results

There arose a clamour on all sides that there never had been a national life in India; that although, thanks to the West, there was at last some sign of it, there were still many obstacles to its full growth. Deep-rooted religious beliefs were said to have smothered it. Idolatry— the worship of innumerable gods and goddesses—was also blamed for keeping it submerged so long. “Away with idolatry!” people shouted. “Root it out, only then will the men and women of the country have new life instilled into them.” Christianity began to be preached, and, in imitation of it, the idea of monotheism. Prostrate India was made to listen to lectures—delivered at public meetings held in the Western manner—on politics, sociology, the freedom of women and widow-marriage. But the feeling of frustration and despair, instead of lessening, grew stronger. The railway, the telegraph and other products of Western civilization came into use; but these did not mend matters, because all such innovations could neither touch nor stimulate the ideals on which the life of the land depended. Since the proper remedy was not applied, the disease could not be cured. How could India, whose soul was religion, be brought to life if her religion was not resuscitated? The influence of the West had brought about its fall. Would it not be futile, then, to look to the atheistic West for its resurrection? Being itself imperfect, how could the West make another part of the world perfect?

11. The national life of India: its merits and demerits

It cannot be said that there were no defects at all in the national life of India before the coming of the Westerners. But the nation being vigorous, there was a constant endeavour on its part to remove any defects. Now that the nation and society were lacking in this effort, the spread of Western ideas and ideals, instead of curing the disease, was on the point of killing the patient.

12. The present decline of religion is the result of the spread of Western thought

It is thus clear that the decline of religion in the West has affected India also. One is surprised to find how far this decay of religion has spread all over the world at the present time. If there is really such a thing as religion, and if men have the power to realize it, through the grace of God, there is no doubt whatsoever that the modern age, steeped in sensuous pleasures, has strayed far away from it. That is the reason why science, although enlarging the scope of modern life by providing men with all kinds of means to enjoyment, has failed to bring them peace. Who will come to the rescue? Whose heart will be so moved by this restlessness and agony of the world as to make him ignore all sense-pleasures and discover a new mode of religion suited to the age? Who will reverse the downward course of religion in East and West, and once again teach men to follow the path to peace?

The divine Lord has promised in the Gita that, through His Maya, He will assume a human body and manifest His powers whenever religion declines, and will help men to obtain peace. Will not the need of the age rouse His compassion? Will not man's helplessness and despair urge God to assume a body?

13. God incarnates once again to stop the decline of religion

The demand of the times has, O reader, actually brought this about; for the divine Lord has, in truth, once again been born as the spiritual Teacher of the world. Listen with faith to His gracious message: *As many faiths, so many paths* and *you will realize the divine Lord through any spiritual practice performed with a sincere heart.* Let us dwell in admiration on the unheard-of renunciation and austerities practised by Him in order to bring back that transcendent knowledge to the world. Come, let us discuss and meditate on that holy life, free from the slightest taint of lust, and thus purify ourselves.

CHAPTER II
SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S BIRTHPLACE (KAMARPUKUR) AND ANCESTRY

1. Why an incarnation is born in a poor family

With the exception of Sri Ramachandra and Lord Buddha, all the divine incarnations were born in poverty and hardship. Consider, for example, the childhood of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, the glory of the race of Kshatriya princes. He was born in a prison and spent his childhood away from his kith and kin in a community of humble cowherds; or the life of Lord Jesus, who, although born in a stable, with a manger for cradle, brought glory to his humble parents; or that of Bhagavan Sankara, born after his father's death, the son of a poor widow; or of Bhagavan Sri Chaitanya, of common parentage; and finally, the humble birth of the Prophet Mohammad, the founder of Islam. But despite this fact, none of them was born in a family where contentment did not reign supreme in the midst of want and poverty; or where the warmth of love and selflessness did not prevail over the chill of penury; or where the hearts of the parents were not adorned with renunciation and purity, and adamantine firmness and austerity were not matched with tender charity and kindness.

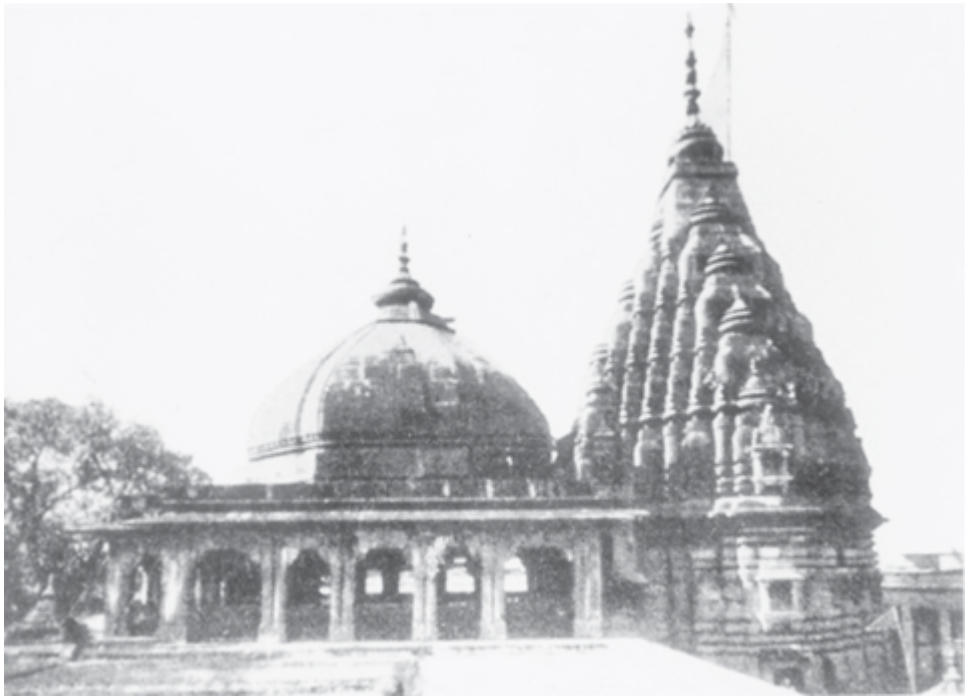
If we think deeply, we find that there is a subtle connection between the condition of poverty and the future course of the lives of the incarnations. For unless, from their early years, they had known and sympathized with the lot of the poor, the oppressed and the miserable, how could they, in later years, have wiped away the tears of such people and brought them solace? That, however, is not all that the incarnations aimed to accomplish. We have already seen that they came into the world mainly to arrest the decline of religion. To fulfil that object they had to acquire intimate knowledge of the

principles underlying religion in the past, and, to bring out by a study of the causes of its decline, new and perfected forms of religion suited to particular times and places. It is in the huts of the lowly and not in the palaces of the rich that this intimate knowledge can be gained; for it is the poor man, deprived of the enjoyment of worldly pleasures, who clings to God and His dispensation as his main support. Although, therefore, religion declines everywhere, a little gleam of the old teaching still brightens the poor man's hut. That is perhaps why these great souls, the world-teachers, are attracted at the time of their birth to the huts of the poor.

Kamarpukur

Sri Ramakrishna’s Parental House, Kamarpukur

Gaya Vishnu Temple which Kshudiram visited



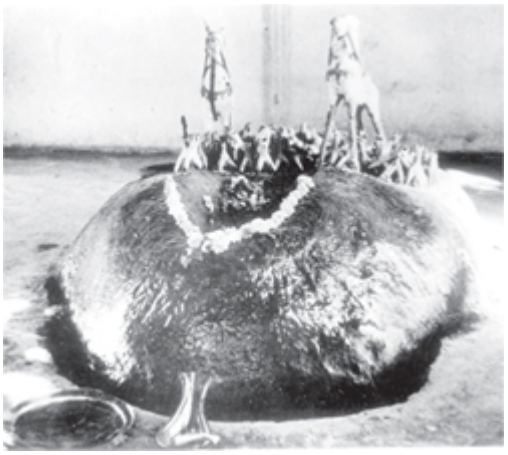
Jugi Siva Temple, Kamarpukur

Sri Ramakrishna's Family Deities: Sitala, Raghuvir and Rameswar Siva

Raghuvir

Haldarpukur

Lahas' School



Anur Visalakshi

Sri Ramakrishna Temple on the spot of his birth

It was even so at the birth of the great Master whose life-story we are about to relate.

2. Kamarpukur, the birth-place of Sri Ramakrishna

A cluster of three villages, forming a triangle, is situated in Bengal, not far from the place where the north-western part of the district of Hoogly joins the districts of Bankura and Medinipur. Although known to the villagers themselves as Sripur, Kamarpukur and Mukundapur, these three villages nestle so close together that they appear to the traveller as different quarters of the same village. The people of the surrounding villages called all the three Kamarpukur, probably because the local landlords had lived, in that village for many generations. At the time we are speaking of, Kamarpukur formed a part of the rent-free estate belonging to the family of the spiritual teacher of the Maharaja of Burdwan. The descendants of this family, Gopilal Goswami, Sukhlal Goswami and others,[1] were living there.

The town of Burdwan is situated about thirty-two miles north of Kamarpukur. A metalled road, skirting Kamarpukur, leads from there to Puri to the south-west. Many poor pilgrims and Sadhus walk along this road to Puri to pay obeisance to Sri Jagannath, the Lord of the universe, and return the same way. The famous temple of Tarakeswar Mahadeva is situated about nineteen or twenty miles north of Kamarpukur. A road passing through Jahanabad or Arambagh on the bank of the river Dwarakeswar connects that place with Kamarpukur. Moreover two highways-—one from Ghata, eighteen miles to the south, and the other from Vanavishnupur, twenty-six miles to the west—enter Kamarpukur.

3. The former prosperity of Kamarpukur and the neighbourhood and the present condition

No words can express the atmosphere of peace that pervaded the mainly agricultural villages of Bengal before they were devastated by malaria in 1867. Surrounded by extensive fields, these small villages of the Hooghly district looked like islands floating in a vast green area. The people enjoyed health and strength, as well as happiness and contentment, since they led an outdoor life and had plenty to eat, the soil being extremely fertile. The villages were densely populated, and the villagers, besides cultivating the fields, engaged themselves in various small industries. Thus Kamarpukur is still famous in that part of the country for Jilapi and Nabat (sweets), and its people even now make a decent living by manufacturing hookah pipes of ebony and selling them in Calcutta. At one time it was famous for producing yarn, Dhotis and towels and for such other handicrafts. Well-known cloth merchants, Vishnu Chapdi and others, lived in this village and maintained a good business with Calcutta. A market is held in the village, even now, every Tuesday and Saturday, and people from the surrounding villages (Tarahat, Vadangaj, Sihar, Desra etc.,) bring to it for sale article's of daily use, such as yarn, Dhotis, towels, cooking-pots, pitchers, baskets, fine and coarse mats etc. along with the produce of the fields. Numerous ceremonial festivals are still observed. To this day, in the month of Chaitra, Kamarpukur reverberates with songs in praise of the goddess Manasa, as well as with the Gajan (Garjana) song in praise of Siva, and in the month of Vaisakh or Jyaishtha, with songs about Hari continuing uninterruptedly for periods of three days. Moreover all kinds of ceremonies pertaining to special occasions (Pal Parvana)[1] are performed throughout the year in the house of the landlord, while daily and special worships take place in the established temples. The poverty of the village has now put a stop to many other similar festivities.

4. The worship of Dharma in that part of the country

At one time the worship of Dharma, which was originally one of the three principal 'gems' of the Buddhists, was celebrated annually with great pomp and splendour. But that time is gone. Sri Dharma is now looked upon as Kurma (the second of the ten important incarnations of Vishnu) and receives only ordinary worship here and in the surrounding villages. Even

brahmins are sometimes seen worshipping the image of this deity. One hears different names for Sri Dharma in different villages. Thus, the Dharma of Kamarpukur is called Rajadhiraja; the Dharma installed at Sripur is named Yatrasiddhiraja; and the one at the village called Madhuvati, near Mukundapur, is known as Sannyasiraja. The chariot procession (Ratha Yatra) of the Dharma of Kamarpukur used to be celebrated formerly with much pomp. The god's big chariot with its nine pinnacles could be seen near the temple; but after it broke down it was never rebuilt. The temple is also falling to pieces for want of repairs, and its priest, Yajnesvara, has now removed the deity to his own house.

5. The Haldar tank, the Bhuti stream and the mango grove

People of various castes, high and low, such as the Brahmin, Kayastha, weaver, milkman, blacksmith, potter, fisherman and Dom (a low caste), live at Kamarpukur. There are three or four tanks in the village, the biggest being called the Haldarpukur. There are also many small ponds, some of them with large numbers of hundred-petalled lotuses and white water-lilies. There are still many brick houses and tombs in the village, though in earlier days there was a larger number of them. The broken temple of Ramananda Sankhari, the dilapidated Rasa-platform of Fakir Datta, heaps of bricks overgrown with jungle, and deserted shrines in various places are evidence of the former prosperity of the village. There are two burning-ghats, called Budhui Moral and Bhutir Khal, one to the north-west, the other to the north-east. To the west of the Bhutir Khal are the common grazing ground, the public mango grove planted by Manikraja, and the Amodar river. The Bhuti stream flows south and joins this river not far from the village.

6. Manikraja of Bhursubo

A mile north of Kamarpukur there is a village called Bhursubo, where lived a very rich man named Manik Chandra Bandyopadhyaya, commonly known as Manikraja to the people of the surrounding villages. Besides the mango grove just mentioned, certain tanks named Sukhasayar and Hatisayar

still remind us of him. It is said that on several occasions about a lakh of Brahmins[1] were invited and fed at his palace.

7. The fort at Mandaran

In the village of Mandaran, south-east of Kamarpukur, there used to be an impregnable fort built to protect the people of the surrounding villages from the attacks of enemies. The course of the neighbouring rivulet, Amodar, was skilfully diverted to serve as a moat for this fort.

8. The big tank of Uchalan and the battlefield of Mogalmari

The ruins of the gateway, the tower and the moat of the fort, and the temple of Siva named Saileswar, not far from it, exist to this day. They indicate the importance of this part of the country during the time of the Pathan rule. It is by the Mandaran fort that the road leading to Burdwan passes. On both sides of this road are many large tanks, the largest being the one at a place called Uchalan, eighteen miles north of the fort. There is also an elephant-stable in ruins at a place along this road. This shows clearly that the road was constructed for use during wars and disturbances. The existence of the battlefield of Mogalmari by this road also attests to the same fact.

9. Ramananda Roy, the landlord of the village of Dere

Two miles west of Kamarpukur there are three villages—called Satbere, Narayanpur, and Dere—situated side by side. The former prosperity of these villages can be inferred from various signs, such as the tank in the village of Dere and the temple near by. At the time of which we are speaking, the three villages were included in different estates, and Ramananda Roy, the landlord of Dere, lived in the village Satbere. This landlord, who was not very rich, greatly oppressed his tenants. When angry for some reason or other, he did not hesitate to deprive a tenant of all his possessions. None of his sons or daughters survived him. It is said that he

could leave behind no progeny on account of the sin of oppressing the tenants. After his death all his estate and property fell into others' hands.

10. Manikram Chattopadhyaya of Dere

About one hundred and fifty years ago, there lived a religious-minded Brahmin family of moderate means in the village of Dere. They were of noble descent, observed the customs of pious Hindus, and worshipped Sri Ramachandra. The temple of Siva and the adjoining tank known as the Chatujee tank still commemorate their memory. Sri Manikram Chattopadhyaya of this family had three sons and a daughter. Of these, the eldest, Kshudiram, was born probably in A.D. 1775. After him came Ramsila, the daughter, and the two other sons, Nidhiram and Kanairam.

11. Manikram's son Kshudiram

It is not known whether Kshudiram ever became proficient in any kind of learning that brought him money. But the Lord had blessed him with truthfulness, contentment, forgiveness, renunciation and other noble qualities, the possession of which is considered by the Sastras the mark of a good Brahmin. He was tall and strong and had a fair complexion and pleasing looks. Kshudiram showed a deep devotion to Sri Ramachandra, who had been worshipped in his family generation after generation. He was in the habit of performing Sandhya, along with his other daily routine, after which he would collect flowers for the worship of Raghuvir (Ramachandra). Not until he finished his worship would he eat anything. He never accepted gifts from Sudras and would even refuse invitations from Brahmins who performed religious rites for them. Nor would he drink water touched by Brahmins who took money for giving their daughters in marriage. He was greatly loved and respected by the villagers for his faithful observance of pious customs.

12. Chandradevi, wife of Kshudiram

Kshudiram took up management of the ancestral property on the death of his father. He performed this duty as best as he could, remaining at the same time steadfast in the path of religion. Some time previously he had married and taken up family responsibilities, but his wife had died young. When he was about twenty-five years of age he married a second time; The bride's name was Chandramani, but in the family she was called simply 'Chandra'. Her father's house was in the village of Saratimayapur. She was simple-hearted, good-looking and devoted to the service of the gods and the twice-born. But her outstanding qualities were her heart-felt religious faith, love and affection, and it was these that made her dear to all. Born probably in the year 1791, she must have been only about eight years old at the time of her marriage in 1799. Her first son, Ramkumar, is said to have been born in 1805. A daughter, Katyayani, was born five years later, and she rejoiced at the birth of her second son, Rameswar, in 1826.

13. Kshudiram lost his property in a dispute with the landlord

It did not take Kshudiram long to discover how difficult it was to manage worldly affairs without deviating from the path of righteousness. Probably a short time after his daughter Katyayani was born he had to undergo a very hard test. We have already spoken of the oppression of the tenants by Ramananda Roy, the landlord of the village. Annoyed with a certain man of Derepur, Ramananda instituted a false case against him, and since someone of good reputation was needed as a witness, he requested Kshudiram to give evidence in his favour. The strictly upright Kshudiram always dreaded litigation, courts and the like, and never had recourse to them against anyone, even when he had a just cause. The request therefore came to him as a shock. Though he knew for certain that he would incur Ramananda's bitter animosity if he did not give the false evidence, he could never agree to such a course. The inevitable happened. The landlord filed a false petition in the court against him as well, won the case and got possession of the whole of Kshudiram's paternal property through auction. In consequence Kshudiram had not even a square inch of land left in Derepur. Although all the people of the village felt great sympathy for him in his trouble, out of fear of the landlord they did not dare help him in any way.

14. Kshudiram left Dere

At the time of his loss Kshudiram was about forty years old. The property[1] inherited from his ancestors, together with that acquired by him over many years, had vanished like a cloud dispersed by the wind. But this calamity did not affect his upright conduct in the least. He took absolute refuge at the holy feet of Raghuvir, calmly reflected on what he should do in order to escape the wicked landlord, and finally bade goodbye for ever to his paternal homestead and village.

15. Kshudiram came to Kamarpukur at the invitation of Sukhlal Goswami and lived there

We have already mentioned Sukhlal Goswami of Kamarpukur. He and Kshudiram were of a like temperament and were old and intimate friends. Sukhlal was much moved on hearing of Kshudiram's misfortune, and vacating a few thatched huts in a part of his homestead invited him to come and live there permanently. Kshudiram thus found a haven of refuge. He accepted the invitation, regarding it as the incomprehensible play (Lila) of the divine Lord, and with his heart filled with gratitude went to Kamarpukur, where he lived ever after. Sukhlal, who loved his friend dearly, felt very happy at his coming, and made a permanent gift to the virtuous Kshudiram of one Bigha and ten Chataks[2] of land for his future maintenance.

Footnote

1. Hriday Ram Mukhopadhyaya spoke of one Anupa Goswami instead of Sukhlal; but his statement is not credible, because the landlords of the village, the Lahas, told us that the said Goswami's name was Sukhlal and that they had purchased about fifty-five years ago most of the land of Kamarpukur from his son Krishnalal Goswami. There is also a tradition in the village that Gopilal Goswami installed the large Sivalinga named Gopesvara. The said Gopilal Goswami may, therefore, have been an ancestor of Sukhlal; or it may be that another name of Sukhlal was Gopilal.

1. Connected with lunar days—especially the eighth, the fourteenth, the full moon and the new moon days.—Tr.

1. The feeding of a lakh of Brahmins, the repositories of learning and holiness, was considered a rare and unique act of piety.—Tr.

1. We were told by Hridayram Mukhopadhyaya that Kshudiram had about 150 *bighas* of land at Derepur. [3 ½ Bighas = l acre.—Tr.]

2. 16 Chataks = l Katha, 20 Kathas = 1 Bigha.—Tr.

CHAPTER III
THE PIOUS FAMILY AT KAMARPUKUR

1. The reason why Kshudiram lived like a Vanaprasthin at Kamarpukur

It is difficult to imagine the thoughts that arose in the minds of Kshudiram and his wife the day they came to Kamarpukur with the ten-year-old Ramkumar and Katyayani, their daughter of four, and settled in the cottage given to them. The world, filled with jealousy and hatred, must have seemed to them a hideous place of the dead, shrouded in dismal-darkness. Thoughts of affection, love, kindness and justice no doubt occasionally shed there a dim light, raising in quivering hearts some hope of happiness, but it is blasted the next moment, leaving behind deep depression. It is natural that many such thoughts should have arisen in their minds when they compared their previous condition with the present one. Only when misery and calamity come, do men realize the transitoriness and worthlessness of this world. It is therefore not at all surprising that Kshudiram now felt detached from the world and that his profoundly religious mind was full of devotion to God and reliance on Him. For he could not forget how unexpected and unasked for was the shelter given to them. Is it then strange that, being indifferent to worldly prospects, he once more devoted his time to the service and worship of the divine Lord and surrendered himself completely to Raghuvir? From now on he was living, no doubt, in the world, but, like the Vanaprasthins of ancient times, he was not of it.

2. Kshudiram came upon the Salagrama of Raghuvir in a strange way

An incident which happened at this time still further intensified Kshudiram's faith in God. One day he went to another village on business. On his way back he became tired and rested under a tree. The vast, lonely

field and a soft, pure breeze brought repose to his troubled mind and tired body. He felt a strong desire to lie down, and no sooner had he done so than he was overcome with sleep. He then had a dream in which he saw standing before him his chosen Ideal, Bhagavan Sri Ramachandra, in the guise-of a divine Boy, His body green like the tender blades of Durva grass. Pointing to a particular spot, the Boy said, "I have been staying here for a long time without food and without anyone to take care of me. Take me to your house: I have a very strong desire that you should serve me." Kshudiram was overcome with emotion and said, paying homage to the Lord again and again: "O Lord, I am without devotion and am very poor. Service befitting you is not possible in my hut, and I shall lose all grace should there be any flaw in it. So why do you make such a difficult request of me?" At this the Boy Ramachandra comforted him and said graciously, "Do not be afraid. I will not take offence at any shortcoming. Take me with you." Unable to control his feelings at the Lord's unexpected grace, Kshudiram burst into tears. Just then his dream came to an end. When he awoke, Kshudiram wondered at the strangeness of his dream and thought, "Ah! If only such good fortune would be mine!" Then suddenly his eyes fell upon the paddy field close by and at once he recognized it as the very place he had seen in the dream. Out of curiosity he approached the spot, where he saw a beautiful Salagrama stone and a snake with expanded hood guarding it. Eager to possess the stone he hastened towards it. On reaching it he found that the snake had disappeared and that the Salagrama was lying at the entrance to its hole. Seeing that the dream had come true, his heart leaped in joy, and he felt no fear of the snake, convinced that he had received God's command. Crying out, "Glory to Raghuvir!", Kshudiram took the stone in his hands. He carefully examined the marks on it and, with his knowledge of the Sastras, found it to be a Raghuvir Sila (Salagrama). Beside himself with joy and wonder, he returned home, performed the purificatory ceremony of the Salagrama according to the Sastras, and installing it as the family deity, began to worship it daily. Even before he came upon the Salagrama in this strange manner, Kshudiram had been worshipping Sri Ramachandra, his chosen Deity, every day. He also worshipped daily the goddess Sitala, invoking her in a consecrated pot filled with water.

3. Kshudram’s steadfastness and dependence on God

His difficulties continued, but Kshudiram cheerfully bore all kinds of misfortune, strictly observing as ever the religious injunctions. On some days, when there was nothing in the house to eat, his devoted wife, Chandradevi, would grow anxious and tell him about it. But, unperturbed, Kshudiram would comfort her and say, “Never mind. If Raghuvir chooses to fast, why shouldn’t we?” At this the simple-hearted Chandra also, like her husband, would resign herself to Raghuvir and go on with her household duties. And somehow food sufficient for the day would come.

4. The paddy field at Lakshmijala

But Kshudiram did not suffer long from this uncertainty about food. For the one Bigha and ten Chataks of land at Lakshmijala given to him by his friend Sukhlal Goswami, now, by the grace of Raghuvir, began to produce so much paddy that there was not only enough for the little family’s annual needs, but also something left over to feed guests and strangers. Kshudiram hired men to plough the field, and when the rice seedlings were ready, he would transplant a few himself, taking the name of Raghuvir, and then let the men finish the work.

5. Kshudiram’s devotion increased and he had spiritual visions: neighbours revered him

Two or three years went by in this manner. Kshudiram depended entirely on Raghuvir and what chance brought him, and he did not lack plain food and clothing. Therefore the hard trials of these two or three years, instead of discouraging him, filled his heart with a sense of reliance on God and a continuous flow of peace and contentment such as few experience. Henceforth it was natural for him to be always indrawn, and in consequence he had from time to time various divine visions. Every morning and evening, during his prayers, he would repeat the meditation Mantra describing the Gayatri with such deep devotion and concentration of mind that his chest became flushed and from his closed eyes flowed tears of love. Early in the morning he would go, basket in hand, to pick flowers for the

worship, and at such times the goddess Sitala, who received his daily adoration, would appear before him as an eight-year-old girl dressed in red and wearing many ornaments. She would accompany him smiling and help him pluck flowers by bending the branches in blossom. These visions filled his heart with joy. His staunch faith and deep devotion were reflected in his countenance and kept him always on a high spiritual plane. Seeing his calm and peaceful face, the villagers instinctively recognized his spirituality and began to venerate him with the love and devotion due to a Rishi. Whenever they saw him coming, they stopped all idle talk, stood up and greeted him respectfully. They hesitated to enter the tank when they saw him bathing, and waited in reverence till he had finished. With complete faith in him, they came for his blessings in weal and woe.

6. How the neighbours regarded Chandradevi

Chandradevi's loving and guileless nature captivated her neighbours and made them look upon her as their mother. From no one else did they receive such heart-felt sympathy in their joys and sorrows. The poor knew that whenever they went to Chandradevi they would receive not only food but also such a genuine welcome and affection as would fill their hearts with inexpressible joy. To holy men living on alms her door was always open. There was nothing that the children could not coax out of Chandradevi. Thus everyone, young and old, was welcome at any time to Kshudiram's cottage, which, in spite of poverty and suffering, always radiated a wonderful peace and joy.

7. Kshudiram's sister Ramsila

As already mentioned, Kshudiram had a sister named Ramsila, and had two younger brothers, Nidhiram and Kanairam, the latter being also called Ramkanai. At the time he lost all his property on account of the dispute with the landlord of Derepur, his sister was thirty-five and his brothers thirty and twenty-five respectively. By then all the three had married and set up their own homes. Ramsila was married to Bhagavat Bandyopadhyaya who lived at Silimpur, a village about twelve miles west of Kamarpukur. She had a

son, Ramchand, and a daughter Hemangini. At the time of Kshudiram's misfortune, Hemangini was sixteen and Ramchand, who had begun to practise as a Muktear (pleader), was about twenty-one. Born in the home of her maternal uncles at Derepur, Hemangini was a greater favourite with them than her brother. Kshudiram brought her up like his own daughter, and when she reached the proper age, he himself gave her away in marriage to Krishnachandra Mukhopadhyaya of Sihar, a village five miles north-west of Kamarpukur. In course of time she became the mother of four sons: Raghava, Ramaratan, Hriday Ram and Rajaram.

8. Kshudiram's two brothers

We could not find out whether Nidhiram had any children, but Kanairam had two sons, Ramtarak (otherwise known as Haladhari) and Kalidas. Kanairam was of a devotional and contemplative nature. Once he went to a drama (Yatra) which portrayed the banishment of Sri Ramachandra to the forest. The performance became so realistic to him that he took Kaikeyi's secret plotting and scheming to be real and was on the point of striking the actor who played the part. On the loss of the ancestral property, Nidhiram and Kanairam, it appears, settled in the villages of their fathers-in-law.

9. Kshudiram's nephew Ramchand

We have already said that Ramachandra Bandyopadhyaya, Ramsila's son, was a pleader. His practice in the town, of Medinipur brought him a good income. Considering the straitened circumstances of his maternal uncles, he now sent fifteen rupees a month to help Kshudiram and ten rupees each to Nidhiram and Kanairam. If Kshudiram did not hear from his nephew for some time, he would become anxious and hasten to Medinipur to see him. We were told of a strange incident which occurred when Kshudiram was once going to Medinipur, and we relate it here as an example of his deep devotion to God.

10. An incident showing Kshudiram's devotion to God

Medinipur is situated about forty miles south-west of Kamarpukur. Having had no news of Ramachandra and his family for a long time, Kshudiram set out one day to see him. It was probably during the month of Magh or Phalgun, when the Vilva trees shed their leaves, making the worship of Siva[1] difficult until new leaves appear. Kshudiram had been experiencing this difficulty for some time.

He started very early and walked steadily on, till he reached a certain village about ten o'clock in the morning. Finding that the Vilva trees there were already in leaf, his heart leaped in joy and all thought of proceeding to Medinipur left his mind. He bought a new basket and a piece of cloth and washed them thoroughly in a pond close by. Then he filled the basket with new Vilva leaves, covered it with wet cloth and returned home, reaching there about three in the afternoon. Immediately on his arrival he bathed and then for a long time joyfully worshipped with the leaves the great God Siva and Sitala, the divine Mother. Not until he had finished the worship did he sit down for his meal. Chandradevi thought this to be the right moment to ask him why he had not gone to Medinipur. When he told her everything, she was amazed to learn that he had come back all that distance solely on account of his eagerness to worship Siva with the leaves. Kshudiram started again for Medinipur very early the next morning.

11. The marriages of Ram-kumar and Katyayani

Thus Kshudiram spent six years at Kamarpukur. His son Ramkumar was now sixteen years old, and his daughter, Katyayani, eleven. His daughter being of the right age, he gave her in marriage to Kenaram Bandyopadhyaya, who lived at Anur, a village two miles north-west of Kamarpukur, while Ramkumar was married to Kenaram's sister. Ramkumar had by then finished his study of Vyakarana (Grammar) and Sahitya (Literature) in a Sanskrit school near the village and was now studying Smriti (the Laws governing the Hindu society and religion).

12. The death of Sukhlal Goswami, and other events

Another three or four years passed. By the grace of Sri Raghuvir, Kshudiram was now considerably more prosperous than before, and free from anxiety, he could give all his time to God. During this period Ramkumar finished his study of Smriti, and applied his mind to the best of his ability to the improvement of the family's economic condition. It was about this time, that Sukhlal Goswami, Kshudiram's great friend, passed away. His death caused Kshudiram deep sorrow.

13. Kshudiram's pilgrimage to Setubandha. The birth of his son Rameswar

After finishing his studies, Ramkumar, now a young man, took upon himself the responsibility of maintaining the family. Kshudiram was thus free to apply himself to other things. He now had a great yearning to go on a pilgrimage, and before long, probably in A.D. 1824 he started on foot for Setubandha-Rameswar. His visits to the places of pilgrimage in South India took him a year, after which he returned home. With him he brought a Banalinga (a symbol of Siva) from Setubandha, which he began to worship daily. This Banalinga, named Rameswar, can be seen even today near the Salagrama stone of Raghuvir and the water-jar symbolizing the goddess Sitala. A long time after the birth of her second child, Chandradevi gave birth to another son in A.D. 1826. In memory of his recent pilgrimage, Kshudiram named this son Rameswar.

14. Ramkumar possessed a supernatural power

The next eight years showed little change in the tenor of life of that poor family at Kamarpukur. Ramkumar now earned money by advising people on religious matters on the authority of Smriti and by performing various religious ceremonies. In consequence, the family did not feel the same want as before. He became expert in the performance of those rites and is said to have obtained a supernatural power to make them effective. Study of the scriptures had given him faith in the worship of Sakti, the primordial Power personified, in whose Mantra he was initiated by a qualified teacher. He had a wonderful vision one day while worshipping this Goddess who had

become his chosen Deity. He felt as if She was marking with Her own finger on the tip of his tongue, some Mantra letters which made him perfect in astrology. Henceforward whatever he asserted would come true. Simply by looking at a patient, he could know whether he would be cured or not. He acquired some fame in those parts for predicting future events. It is said that on seeing a person suffering from a severe disease he would start performing propitiatory rites for his recovery and would say emphatically, "As soon as the grains I am now sprinkling over the place of worship begin to sprout, this person will recover"; and, as a matter of fact, what he said actually came true. His nephew, Sivaram Chattopadhyaya, told us the following story as an illustration of this power.

15. An illustration of that power

Being in Calcutta on business, Ramkumar was bathing in the Ganga one morning, when a rich man and his family also came for a bath. The man's wife was seated in a palanquin which was taken to the river so that she could take her bath inside it. Coming, as he did, from a village, Ramkumar had never seen a woman bathing in this way protected from public gaze. Looking at the palanquin with wonder, he happened to catch a sight of the woman's face for a moment. He instantly knew through his supernatural power that she would die the next day, and was so overcome by the thought that he could not help muttering sadly to himself: "Alas, the body which today is being bathed with such formality will tomorrow be immersed as a corpse in the Ganga and disposed of in the sight of all!" The rich man overheard this and, in order to test the truth of his words, pressed Ramkumar to come to his house. His real intention was to teach him a good lesson in case his prediction proved false. The young woman was in perfect health and there was no indication whatever at that time of such a mishap. But since what Ramkumar had predicted actually came to pass, the man finally could not but let him go in peace.

16. An incident concerning Ramkumar's wife— another illustration of that power

Once, looking into his wife's future, Ramkumar made a sad prediction which later came true. She is said to have had auspicious marks. From the very day he married her and brought her home, the wheel of fortune took a happy turn. She was then seven years old and it was probably in A.D. 1820. It was from this time that the improvement in his father's circumstances began, for just then the monthly help from his nephew, Ramachandra of Medinipur, bagan to come in. Naturally, any one who on entering the home of a Hindu family brings such good luck is looked upon with love and respect. Moreover, since Ramkumar's child-wife was then the only daughter-in-law of the family, it is not surprising that everyone made much of her. We were told that, in spite of her good qualities, too much of indulgence and attention made her touchy and obstinate. But although these defects were noticed by all, no one ventured either to mention them or to correct her; for, everyone overlooked her little defects, remembering that she had brought prosperity to the family since the day of her coming. But when she was grown up, Ramkumar, one day, looked at her and predicted that although she had auspicious marks she would die if she should ever conceive. When he found, however, that this did not happen for several years, he thought that she was barren and felt relieved. But at the age of thirty-five she did conceive, and the following year, A.D. 1849, she passed away after giving birth to a very beautiful male child. The boy was named Akshay. Chronologically, this incident comes much later, but we have narrated it here for the sake of convenience.

17. The distinguishing feature of Kshudiram's family

A peculiar characteristic of a divine and subtle kind was shared by every one of Kshudiram's pious household. It is probably because this characteristic was manifest to a marked degree in Kshudiram and his wife that it was inherited by their children. Since we have already mentioned several instances of it relating to Kshudiram, it will not be out of place if we relate a similar event regarding Chandramani. This will show how Chandramani also, like her husband, saw divine visions from time to time. The event took place shortly before Ramkumar was married. The fifteen-

year-old boy was then studying in a Sanskrit school and at the same time trying to help the family by performing worship in various houses.

18. Chandradevi had a spiritual vision

Once in the month of Asvin Ramkumar had gone to a house at Bhursubo to perform the evening worship of the goddess Lakshmi. When her son did not return home, though it was past midnight, Chandra became very restless, and coming out of the house waited for him anxiously. While looking in the direction from which he was to come, she saw a lone figure approaching by the field-path leading from Bhursubo to Kamarpukur. Thinking that it was her son, she went a few steps forward in great joy to meet him. When the person drew nearer, she found that it was not Ramkumar, but a very beautiful girl, bedecked with various ornaments. As Chandra was full of fear that something had happened to her son, the sight of a respectable girl walking thus at dead of night did not strike her as something strange. She just went up to her and called out: "Where do you come from, my child?" The girl answered, "From Bhursubo." Chandra then asked her anxiously, "Did you meet my son, Ramkumar? Is he coming back?" It did not cross her mind even for a moment how an absolute stranger like this girl could possibly know her son. The girl replied comforting her: "I come from the very house where your son went to perform the worship. Do not worry; he will return soon." Hearing this, Chandra felt relieved and became more observant. Noticing at last the girl's remarkable beauty and her dress and ornaments of a novel kind, and hearing her sweet voice, she said, "You are so young! Where are you going at this time of the night wearing such fine ornaments and dress? And what is this strange ornament on your ears?" With a smile the girl said: "It is called Kundala," and added, "I have yet to go a long distance." Thinking that she was in trouble Chandra said affectionately, "Come, my child, rest for the night at our house. Tomorrow you may go at your leisure." "No, mother," replied the girl, "I must go just now. I will come to your house some other time." Taking leave of her she went in the direction of the larger paddy stacks of the Lahas near by. Surprised to see her going towards the house of the Lahas instead of following the regular path, Chandra thought that she

had missed the way. She went after her, but could not find her, though she searched in all directions. Then, recalling what the girl had said, it suddenly dawned upon her that she might have seen the goddess Lakshmi! She hastened to her husband and, in great excitement, told him everything from beginning to end, in great detail. After hearing the whole account, Kshudiram assured her that there was no doubt that the divine goddess Lakshmi had graciously revealed Herself to her. Soon after this Ramkumar returned home and, hearing what had happened, was filled with wonder.

19. Kshudiram's desire to make a pilgrimage to Gaya

Time passed on and it was now A.D. 1835. Feeling once again a strong urge to go on a pilgrimage, Kshudiram decided to go to Gaya to perform rites for the satisfaction of the spirits of his forefathers. He was now sixty, still that did not prevent him from proceeding on foot to the holy abode of Vishnu. Hriday, the son of Kshudiram's niece Hemangini, told us of a strange event which made him undertake this journey to Gaya.

20. Hriday's story regarding it

Once, on receiving the news that his daughter Katyayani was seriously ill, Kshudiram went to Anur to see her. She was then about twenty-five years old. Watching her gestures and manner of talk, he felt convinced that she was possessed by a spirit. Then, concentrating his mind on God he thus addressed it, "God or demigod; Whatever you be, why do you harass my daughter? Leave her at once and go your way." At this, the spirit got frightened and said in a pleading voice through Katyayani: "I will leave your daughter's body immediately if you promise to offer a worship for me at Gaya and thus bring to an end my present miserable condition. I make a solemn promise that the moment you leave your home to do this, she will be free from all troubles."

Moved by the suffering of the spirit, Kshudiram at once said: "I will go to Gaya, the abode of Vishnu, as soon as I can, and do as you wish. But it will make me very happy if I get some proof that you have actually obtained deliverance after the worship has been offered." The spirit replied:

“I assure you that as proof of my deliverance I will break down the largest branch of yonder Nim tree, while going away.” According to Hriday it was this incident that made Kshudiram go to Gaya. As some time afterwards, the branch of the Nim tree suddenly broke, there was no longer any doubt that the spirit had obtained deliverance. The affliction also left Katyayani. We cannot vouch for the truth of Hriday’s story; but there is no doubt that it was about this time that Kshudiram went to Gaya.

21. Kshudiram’s divine dream at Gaya

Some time during the winter of 1835, Kshudiram visited Varanasi[1] (Banaras) and Gaya. It was the beginning of Chaitra (middle of March) when he reached Gaya after paying obeisance to Visvanatha (the Lord of the universe) at Varanasi. He came to Gaya at this time of the year probably because he knew that the spirits of his ancestors would have immense satisfaction if worship was offered at that holy place during spring, in the month of Chaitra. He lived there for about a month, performed all the ceremonies according to the scriptures and at last offered worship at the lotus feet of Gadadhar (Vishnu). Because of his great faith Kshudiram experienced unspeakable peace and satisfaction on thus performing the prescribed obsequial rites in honour of his ancestors. Having fulfilled to the best of his capacity his obligation to his forefathers, he was now free from all anxiety. When the thought came to him that the divine Lord had made it possible for an unworthy person like him to accomplish all this, his grateful heart overflowed with a feeling of humility and love such as he had never experienced before. Peace and joy were with him all that day and at night also. Scarcely had he fallen asleep when he had a dream. He saw himself in the holy temple, in the act of offering worship to his forefathers, at the divine feet of Gadadhar. He even saw his ancestors in luminous celestial bodies, joyfully accepting the Pindas and blessing him. He could not control his emotion at seeing them after what seemed a very long time. With tears in his eyes, and a heart overflowing, with devotion, he bowed down to them and touched their feet. The very next moment he found that the temple was filled with a divine light as never seen by him before. His forefathers were standing in the temple on both sides in a reverential attitude with their

hands folded, worshipping a wonderful divine Being seated happily on a beautiful throne. He had a luminous body, green like the colour of new Durva grass. Looking at Kshudiram with benign, affectionate eyes, He beckoned him. Hardly concious of what he was doing Kshudiram drew near and full of devotion prostrated himself at His feet in worship, and uttered hymns in praise. Pleased by his worship that divine Being addressed him thus, in a sweet voice, "Kshudiram, your extraordinary devotion has made me very happy; I bless you and I will be born as your son and will receive your loving care." On hearing these words—strange even for a dream—Kshudiram's joy knew no bounds. But the very next moment the thought struck him how being so poor, he could possibly feed and give proper shelter to such an exalted Being. This made him exceedingly sad and in a voice choked with tears, he said, "No, no, Lord, I am not worthy of such good fortune. Is it not enough that Thou hast blessed me by graciously revealing Thyself and wishing to be born as my son? If Thou wert really to be born as my son, what service can a poor man like me render?" Hearing these words full of pathos, that celestial Being seemed to become even more gracious than before, and said, "Do not fear, Kshudiram, I will relish whatever you give me to eat. Let my desire be fulfilled." Kshudiram had not the heart to say "No." Conflicting emotions like joy and sorrow assailed him with so much force that he could hardly contain himself, and lost consciousness. This broke his dream.

22. Kshudiram returned to Kamarpukur

For quite a while after waking up, Kshudiram did not know where he was. The reality of the dream overwhelmed him. Gradually regaining consciousness of the outside world, he rose from his bed and recalling the details of the strange dream, viewed it from different angles. His believing heart was at last convinced that since a divine dream must come true, some great soul would soon be born in his house. He was destined, even at that advanced age, to see again the face of a new child. He then decided not to speak of that remarkable dream to anyone till it had actually come to pass. A few days later he bade farewell to Gaya, the abode of Vishnu, and returned to Kamarpukur. It was then the month of April, A.D. 1835.

Footnote

1. Leaves of the Vilva tree are necessary for the worship of Siva.—Tr.

1. Some say that Kshudiram visited Varanasi much earlier, when he started from Derepur on pilgrimage to Vrindavan and Ayodhya. When shortly afterwards a son was born and then a daughter, he remembered this pilgrimage and named them Ramkumar and Katyayani. During the pilgrimage mentioned above he is said to have visited only Gaya.

CHAPTER IV
STRANGE EXPERIENCES OF CHANDRADEVI

1. Recorded spiritual experiences of the parents of incarnations at the time of their birth

The unique spiritual experiences and visions of the parents of great souls who sanctify the earth by their birth, are recorded in the religious books of all races. For example, this has been done in the case of the parents of divine personages like the glorious Sri Ramachandra, Bhagavan Sri Krishna, Buddha the son of Mayadevi, Jesus the son of Mary, Bhagavan Sri Sankara, Sri Chaitanya the great Lord, and others who, ever since their birth, have been receiving the adoration and reverence of devout human beings. It will be sufficient if we tell the reader a few instances:

It is well known that, according to the *Ramayana,* the mothers of Sri Ramachandra and his three half-brothers conceived on eating the milk-pudding left over in the sacrificial vessel. It is also recorded there that they came to know, more than once, before and after the birth of the sons, that they were endowed with spiritual powers and were actually parts of Vishnu, the divine Lord and Preserver of the universe.

The parents of Sri Krishna knew, both at the time of his entering the mother's womb and also immediately after he was born, that he was God incarnate endowed with the six divine powers. Besides this, Puranas like the *Bhagavata* recount strange incidents in their daily lives from the moment Krishna was born.

When the Buddha came, Mayadevi saw in a vision an exalted Being entering her womb in the form of an effulgent white elephant, and all the

gods including Indra paying homage to her because of her great good fortune.

Before Lord Jesus was born, his mother Mary felt that she had become pregnant without knowing her husband, Joseph. Filled with a spiritual radiance never seen before, she knew that she had conceived.

The mother of Bhagavan Sankara knew that she had conceived when the God of gods, Mahadeva, came to her in a vision and granted her a boon.

We read in *Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita* and other books that Sachidevi, the mother of Bhagavan Sri Chaitanya, also had similar spiritual experiences.

All the religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, etc.,—have shown that the worship of God with intense love is the easiest way to obtain His grace. Since they all assert this, the question that naturally arises in the mind of an impartial investigator is, whether there is any truth underlying this statement; and if so, what part of the experiences narrated above should be accepted and what rejected.

2. Reason underlying that statement

Even reason suggests that, after all, there may be some truth in what has been said; for modern science accepts that only parents possessing great virtues can beget children of lofty character. So it cannot be denied that the parents of Krishna, Buddha, Jesus and those like them were endowed with the noblest qualities. And, again, it is clear that when those remarkable children were born, the parents dwelt in exalted planes of consciousness beyond the reach of ordinary human beings. It was this that made them fit for such unique visions and experiences.

3. Although difficult to accept, such visions etc., are not to be discarded as untrue

Although the Puranas record many examples of such experiences, and though they are not opposed to reason, the human mind cannot accept them fully. Putting its trust only in knowledge gained by the senses, it cannot fully believe in the existence of entities such as the Self, God, Liberation, a

hereafter and the like, except through direct realization. Although this is so, an impartial investigator does not discard any experience only because it is rare or uncommon, but taking his stand on facts he calmly proceeds to collect evidences for and against it; and, finally, on the basis of these objective data either rejects or accepts it.

In any case, we have come to know through reliable sources that the parents of the great personage whose life we are to write, had at the time of his birth, various spiritual visions and experiences. We have, therefore, no alternative but to record those facts. In the previous chapter, we told the reader a few such instances about Kshudiram and we will now do the same in respect of Chandradevi.

4. On his return from Gaya, Kshudiram found a change in Chandradevi's mental condition

On his return home, Kshudiram did not tell any one about the strange dream he had had at Gaya, but waited to see what would happen. The first thing he observed was the wonderful change that had come over Chandradevi. In his eyes, she was no longer an ordinary woman, but indeed a goddess. An all-embracing love, springing from some unknown source, filled her heart and raised her to a lofty plane beyond all worldly desires. She was now more concerned about the wants of her neighbours than about her own affairs. In the midst of her household duties she would now and then go to attend to their needs. Unobserved she would take provisions and other daily necessaries from her store, and give to the needy. After finishing the service of Raghuvir, she would serve food to her husband and children; then, though already late, she would go, before taking her own food, to find out if her neighbours had taken theirs. If some day she happened to meet anyone who for any reason had gone without food, she would insist on taking him home and feeding him with her own share of cooked food. Then she would herself take what little she could find and pass the day quite contented.

5. Chandradevi's motherly affection found a wider range

Kshudiram found that Chandra, who always loved as her own the children of the neighbourhood, now felt a motherly love for the gods also. She actually looked upon Raghuvir, the family deity, as her own son, and also regarded the goddess Sitala and the emblem of the god Rameswar, as her children. Formerly her heart always used to be filled with awe at the time of the service and worship of these deities, but now the force of love completely replaced that feeling. Any idea of fear or hesitation in her approach to the gods vanished, and she had now nothing to hide from them or ask of them. Instead, came the assurance that the gods were even closer to her than her own children, and an intense desire to sacrifice her all to make them happy, and an ecstasy of being bound to them in an eternal relation.

6. Kshudiram's anxiety for her and his desire to warn her

Kshudiram noticed that, as a result of her care-free devotion to the gods and the joy born of her intimate relationship with them, the simple-hearted Chandra became more trusting than ever. She could no longer suspect anyone nor look upon another as a stranger. He thought, "The selfish world will never appreciate such guilelessness. On the contrary, she will be called silly or mad or something like that." Therefore, he looked for an opportunity to warn her.

7. Chandradevi's strange dream

It was not long before his opportunity came. The simple Chandra could not keep a single thought from her husband. She often confided her thoughts even to her friends. How then could she keep them from one whom God had placed nearer to her than anyone else in the world? Therefore after Kshudiram returned home from Gaya, Chandradevi, for days together, took every opportunity to relate to him all that she had seen or experienced during his absence. One day she told him: "When you were away, I had a strange dream in which I saw a luminous god lying on my bed. At first I thought it was you, but soon realized that no human being could be like that. Then I woke up, but the thought persisted that the god

was still in the bed. The next moment, another thought came. Does a god ever appear to a human being in this way?' Then it occurred to me that some wicked person might have entered the room for an evil purpose and that perhaps the sound of his footsteps had caused my dream. A great fear then seized me. I got up hurriedly and lighted a lamp, but found that there was no one in the room and the door was still bolted from within. But fear kept me awake the rest of that night. Then I thought, 'Is it possible that a person had entered the room somehow by removing the bolt, but seeing me awake, ran away after replacing it in a mysterious way?' As soon as it was morning, I sent for Dhani and Prasanna, and after telling them everything, asked: 'Do you think a man really entered my room? I have no quarrel with any one in the village. Only I had some words with Madhu Jugi, the other day, over a trifling matter. Is it possible that he entered my room because of some grudge against me?' Both of them laughed and chided me, saying, 'You silly woman! Has old age affected your brain? Why do you talk that way about your dream? Think what other people will say when they hear about it! It will give rise to a scandal and you will be ridiculed if you mention it to anybody again.' Hearing this I thought, 'Oh, then it was really a dream. I would not tell anyone about it but you on your return.'

8. Chandradevi's divine vision and experience in front of the Siva temple

"On another occasion when I was speaking with Dhani in front of the temple of the Jugis, I suddenly saw a divine effulgence come from the holy image of the great God Siva, fill the temple and rush towards me in waves. Taken by surprise I was on the point of telling Dhani about it, when all of a sudden the light engulfed me and swiftly entered into my body. Stunned by wonder and fear, I fell down unconscious. Afterwards, when Dhani had helped me to recover, I told her everything. At first she was much surprised; then she said, 'You had an epileptic fit.' But I have the feeling that the light has been in my womb ever since, and that I am pregnant. I told this also to Dhani and Prasanna, but they rebuked me and called me silly, mad and what not. According to them what I had experienced was caused by some delusion or bodily affliction. Trying in various ways to make me understand

this, they warned me not to speak of the occurrence to anyone else. Determined not to divulge it to anyone except you, I have so far kept silent. Well, what do you think? Was it the grace of God that did it, or could it have been due only to ill health? Even now I have the feeling that I am pregnant."

9. Kshudiram warned Chandradevi not to tell these things to anybody

As he listened to everything that Chandra said, Kshudiram remembered his own dream at Gaya. Then reassuring her in various ways, he said: "Do not henceforth speak about such visions and experiences to anybody except me. Be free from all anxiety and know for certain that whatever Raghuvir shows by His grace is for our good. During my stay at Gaya Gadadhar revealed to me in a supernatural way that a son would be born to us." These words of her godlike husband set Chandradevi's mind at rest; and obeying Him she henceforward depended entirely on Raghuvir. Three or four months had passed after this conversation between Kshudiram and his wife, when it became clear to everyone that Chandradevi, although past forty-five, had become pregnant again. Women are said to gain in loveliness and grace when they are in the family way. This was noticed in Chandradevi also, and Dhani and other women of the village used to remark that she appeared lovelier this time than on previous occasions. As the news spread, some of them began to whisper among themselves: "Imagine a woman conceiving at her age and looking so sweet! She may even die at the time of delivery."

10. Chandradevi's visions after conception

Day by day, after she had conceived, Chandradevi's spiritual visions and experiences became more numerous. It is said that at this time her visions of gods and goddesses occurred almost daily. At times, she was aware of a purifying fragrance coming from the bodies of these holy beings and spreading over the whole house; or, again, she would hear celestial voices and be struck with wonder. It is also said that at this time her heart overflowed with motherly love for all the gods and goddesses. Almost every

day she would tell her husband about these visions and experiences and ask why they should come to her. Kshudiram comforted her in various ways and told her not to be perturbed. We shall now relate an incident of this period. We were told that Chandra described it thus to her husband with a feeling of awe: “O revered one, there is no end to the number of gods and goddesses who have shown themselves to me from time to time ever since the day I saw the light, standing in front of the Siva temple. Many of them I have never seen before, not even in pictures. Today, I saw a god come on the back of a swan. At first I was startled; but then feeling sorry for him as his face was red with the heat of the sun I called him and said, ‘O dear little god riding a swan, your face looks burnt by the sun. There is in the house some cold rice, prepared yesterday. Come, eat a little and get refreshed before you go.’ He heard me and smiled, but then faded away and I could see him no more. I see many such forms. I do not worship or meditate on them and yet I see them at any time of the day or night. Sometimes they come before me in human shapes, and then dissolve into thin air. Can you tell me why I see all this? Is it some disease? At times I wonder if I am possessed by the spirit of Gosain[1].”, Then Kshudiram told her again about the dream he had had at Gaya and pointed out how fortunate she was to be actually carrying in her womb the Supreme Lord whose purifying influence alone gave rise to her spiritual visions. Because of her absolute faith in her husband’s words, what he now said filled Chandra’s heart with supreme devotion. Fortified by a new strength she became free from anxiety.

Time rolled on. Completely surrendering themselves to Raghuvir, Kshudiram and his virtuous wife spent their days in the expectation of beholding, as their son, the divine Being whose auspicious presence had already filled their lives with deep devotion.

Footnote

1. The appearance, after the death of Sukhlal Goswami, of various supernatural portents gave the villagers the idea that either he or some other dead person of his family had become a ghost and was living in the Bakul tree in front of his house. Under the influence of that belief the

villagers used to say, whenever anyone had a supernatural experience, that the person was possessed by Gosain (Goswami). The simple-hearted Chandradevi also thought so at the time.

CHAPTER V
A GREAT SOUL IS BORN

Autumn was succeeded by the ‘season of dew’ and winter. Spring, the ‘king of the seasons’, had arrived. There was a pleasant softness in the air, and all creation was pulsating with new life. The lovely month of Phalgun—neither hot nor cold—was only six days old. There was a great surge of love in nature which, in its beauty, manifested—as the scriptures say—a particle of the bliss of Brahman latent in all things. Of all the seasons, spring has received just a little more of that divine effulgent bliss, since it showers on the world so great a joy.

1. Chandradevi’s apprehension was removed by her husband

Chandradevi’s time of delivery was near at hand, and the heart was filled with a celestial joy as she prepared the daily food offering for Raghuvir. But in her body there was a feeling of great lassitude. Then suddenly the thought came that something might happen at any moment, and that, if she should deliver just then, there would be nobody in the house to prepare the offerings. What was she to do? Alarmed, she told her thoughts to her husband. Kshudiram put her mind at rest saying, “Fear not. Surely He who is now in your womb will not, by His birth, become a hindrance to the worship and service of Raghuvir. Don’t be anxious; certainly you will be able to manage the service of the god today. I have already arranged for the service from tomorrow, and Dhani has been asked to sleep here from tonight.” At this Chandra felt a new strength in her body and cheerfully went on with her household duties. It happened exactly as Kshudiram had said. The midday and evening offerings to Raghuvir and the other services to Him were finished without a single hitch. Kshudiram and Ramkumar went to bed after taking their night meal; and Dhani came and lay in the

same room with Chandradevi. Besides the shrine-room of Raghuvir, there were two bedrooms with a thatched roof, and a kitchen. In another small room there was a husking machine on one side, and, a fire-place for boiling paddy on the other. For want of a better place, this room, which also had a thatched roof, was kept ready for Chandra's confinement.

2. The birth of Gadadhar

It was some ten minutes before dawn that Chandradevi felt the first pangs of labour. Dhani helped her to the lying-in room, and there, almost immediately, she gave birth to a male child. After doing the needful for Chandra, Dhani turned her attention to the baby only to find that it had disappeared from the place where she had kept it. In alarm she took the lamp to look for the child and found that it had rolled down the ground covered with blood and slime into the hollow fireplace and was lying there, with its little body adorned with ashes, and still not crying! Dhani tenderly picked up the child, washed it, and looking at it in the light wondered at its beauty and its size. It looked like a six-months-old infant! Chandramani's friends, Prasanna and other women of the Laha family, were sent for. As soon as they arrived, Dhani told them what had happened. At the sacred solemn hour before sunrise, the sound of the conch filled that humble cottage— the scene of Kshudiram's austerity—and proclaimed to the world the advent of a great soul. Ascertaining the signs of the zodiac under which the child was born, Kshudiram, well versed in astrology, found that the boy had come into the world at an especially auspicious moment.

3. The astrological signs at the moment of Gadadhar's birth

It was, according to the Hindu calendar which reckons the day from sunrise to sunrise, Wednesday, the sixth day of Phalgun in B.E. 1242, or 1757 of the Saka year, or Thursday, February 18, A.D. 1836 according to Gregorian calendar. The child was born just twelve minutes before sunrise. The auspicious second lunar day of the bright fortnight and the twentyfifth of the lunar constellations (Purvabhadrapada) had combined to bring about the happy astrological conjunction called the Siddhiyoga. The Sun, the

Moon and Mercury had come together in the sign of the zodiac under which the boy was born. Saturn had then reached the highest point of the zodiac, indicating that the boy would have a unique life. Calculations according to the method of the great sage, Parasara, showed that the 'planets' Rahu and Ketu occupied the highest point of the zodiac and were in the ascendant. Finally, Jupiter which was then beginning to rise, also exerted a strong and auspicious influence on the child's destiny.

4. Gadadhar's name according to the constellation at the time of birth

Later, well-known astrologers also said that the time[1] of birth came under a very auspicious sign of the zodiac (Lagna or Rasi), which indicated, beyond all doubt, that the person concerned "would be virtuous and respected and would always perform good deeds. Surrounded by many disciples, he would live in a temple; would found a new institution for teaching religion, generation after generation; and would be universally revered as a great soul born as a part of Narayana." On hearing this Kshudiram's mind was full of wonder, and his grateful heart felt that his divine dream at Gaya had actually come true. He then performed the birth-ceremony and named the boy Sambhuchandra after the sign of the zodiac under which he was born; but in memory of his remarkable dream, he decided to call him Gadadhar, by which name he was afterwards known.

Looking at the face of their beautiful child, and assured of his unique destiny, Kshudiram and Chandramani thought themselves blessed. They performed the ceremony of taking the child out for the first time and naming him, and determined to bring him up with great care.

Footnote

1. The detailed description of Sri Ramakrishna's horoscope appearing in this chapter has been transferred to the appendix at the end of the volume.—Tr.

CHAPTER VI
GADADHAR'S CHILDHOOD AND THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER

1. The gift of a cow by Ramchandra

According to the scriptures, the parents of incarnations like Rama, Krishna and others, knew through their spiritual visions both before and after the birth of their sons, that these were under the special protection of Providence. But, blinded by parental affection, they forgot that fact, and would therefore always be anxious about their welfare. This applies to Kshudiram and his wife Chandradevi also. For, the lotus face of their loving child made them often forget the divine dream at Gaya and the celestial vision near the Siva temple, and they began to devise various means for his proper care and nourishment. The news of the birth was sent to Ramchandra, Kshudiram's prosperous nephew, at Medinipur. Fearing that there would not be sufficient milk for his uncle's poor family, he sent them a milch cow, thereby removing Kshudiram's anxiety on that score. But though all that was wanted for the new-born child came in unexpected ways from different quarters, there was no end to the anxiety of the parents. Time thus rolled on.

2. Gadadhar's charms

As days went by, the baby's charm began to attract people more and more. He captivated the hearts not only of his parents and every other member of the family, but also of the village women. Whenever the village women had some leisure, they would hasten to Chandra and if asked why they came, would answer, "What are we to do? Our longing to see your

baby every day brings us here." From now on, women relatives from the neighbouring villages also began to come to Kshudiram's humble cottage oftener than before. Growing up without want, and surrounded by love and care, the new-comer gradually passed his fifth month, and the time for the first rice-eating ceremony of the baby was at hand.

At first Kshudiram decided to perform this ceremony in a simple way in keeping with his means. His idea was just to make it conform to the scriptural injunction and to conclude it by giving the child the rice offered to Raghuvir, and to invite a few near relatives. But actually, things took a different course. At the secret prompting of Kshudiram's great friend, Dharmadas Laha, the village landlord, the foremost Brahmins and other leading men of the village came to Kshudiram and, to his utter surprise, insisted that he should feed them on that auspicious day. Kshudiram was in a great fix; for since all the villagers respected and loved him, he could not make up his mind as to whom to invite and whom to leave out. And to invite all was out of the question because of his slender resources. Convinced in his heart that Raghuvir would show him the way out, he sought the advice of Dharmadas. As soon as he came to know of his friend's desire to take the responsibility for the ceremony on himself, Kshudiarm left the whole matter to him and returned home. Dharmadas cheerfully made all arrangements for the ceremony, almost entirely at his own expense, and the function went off smoothly. We are told that people of all castes in the village came to Kshudiram's cottage for the ceremony and enjoyed taking the food offered to Raghuvir. Many poor beggars also had their fill that day and left, each with a blessing for Kshudiram's son.

3. The turn of Chandradevi's divine visions

Gadadhar's every little action appeared sweeter with the passing of time, and filled Chandradevi's heart with joy, but she was not quite free from fear. Before the birth of this child she had never asked the gods for any favour. But now, urged by a mother's love, a thousand times a day, consciously or unconsciously, her heart poured forth prayers for her son. And yet she could not shake off her anxiety altogether. The thought of her son's care and well-being so completely filled her mind now that, before long, it could not but

come in the way of her seeing spiritual visions. But they still came to her from time to time, and filled her sometimes with amazement, sometimes with an apprehension of evil. We shall now relate an example of this, having heard it from a reliable source.

4. Chandradevi's vision: Gadadhar looked much bigger

One morning, when Gadadhar was seven or eight months old, he fell asleep at his mother's breast. Chandra put him to rest under a mosquito-net and went out of the room to attend to her household duties. Shortly afterwards, when she happened to come back to the room for something, she found that instead of the child, a strange tall person was lying under the net, filling the whole bed. In great alarm Chandra rushed out of the room and called for her husband. As soon as he came, she told him what she had seen and both of them went to find no one except the child sleeping as before. Even then, Chandra's fear did not abate. She went on repeating: "I am certain that it was a mischievous spirit who did it. I distinctly saw a tall person lying in the bed where our son lies. It was certainly not a delusion. How could it be? Do call immediately an experienced exorcist to examine the child. Otherwise, some harm may befall him." Kshudiram consoled her saying: "There is nothing strange in your getting visions even now about our son; for we were blessed with them even before his birth. So drive away the idea that it was the doing of a spirit. With Raghuvir in the house, is it ever possible for spirits to come here to harm the boy? Therefore be at rest and do not speak to anyone about it. Be sure that Raghuvir always protects him." Although for the time being Chandra was pacified by her husband's words, the fear of harm befalling the child still haunted her mind like a shadow. For a long time that day, with folded hands, she poured out to Raghuvir the anguish of her heart.

5. Sarvamangala, the younger sister of Gadadhar

Years thus went by, bringing to Gadadhar's parents joy and sorrow, exaltation and anxiety. The sweet influence the little boy exerted over them and over others from the very beginning, increased day by day. Four or five

years gradually passed. During this period, Kshudiram's last child, a daughter named Sarvamangala, was born.

6. Gadadhar's preparation for going to school

As Gadadhar grew up, Kshudiram was filled with wonder and delight at noticing the development of the boy's remarkable memory and intelligence. Sometimes he would take the lively boy on his lap and repeat to him a long list of names of his ancestors, or short hymns to gods and goddesses, and the various ways of paying homage to them, or wonderful stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata.* He found that Gadadhar could remember, by hearing it only once, most of what he was told, even after a long time, and that, when the boy was asked to repeat, he could do so without faltering. At the same time, he discovered that, just as the boy took to and remembered some things with great eagerness, he also remained indifferent to certain other things which did not appeal to him in spite of all efforts to rouse his interest. He noticed this when trying to teach him arithmetic, especially the multiplication table, and thought it unnecessary to force the impatient lad, still so young, to learn those things. But finding that the boy was becoming more and more restless, he sent him to school after the usual ceremony. He was then five years old. Gadadhar was very happy, to meet boys of his own age, and his loving ways endeared him to them and to the teacher.

7. The school of the Lahas

The school was held in the spacious theatre-hall in front of the house of the Lahas, the landlords of the village. A teacher, paid mainly by them, taught their own children and those of the neighbourhood. In fact, it was the Lahas who were chiefly responsible for starting the school. It was not far from Kshudiram's cottage, and was held twice daily, morning and evening. The children came in the morning and after learning their lessons for two or three hours, returned home for the bath and food. They came again at three or four in the afternoon, remained till sunset and were then free. Very young boys like Gadadhar had not, of course, to study for so long a period; but had

nevertheless to remain in the school. After finishing their lessons, the little boys stayed in their places or sometimes went for play. The older boys helped the new-comers with their lessons and also saw to it that they went through their old lessons every day. Thus, although the school had only one teacher, the work went on smoothly. One Jadunath Sarkar was in charge when Gadadhar first entered school, but he retired shortly afterwards, for various reasons, and one Rajendranath Sarkar was appointed in his place.

8. Kshudiram became aware of the boy's peculiar temperament

The wonderful dreams and visions which had begun even before Gadadhar was born and foretold the boy's destiny had made a lasting impression on Kshudiram's mind. And so, whenever he found the boy doing something naughty, like all lively children, he could never be harsh with him. Instead, he would gently ask the boy not to do it again. He now and then noticed signs of wilfulness in Gadadhar but he was not sure whether this was due to the undue attention everybody paid him or to the boy's own nature. Instead of going to school, the self-willed boy would go and play with his companions outside the village; or, without caring to tell anybody, go to an open-air performance called the *Yatra,* at some place in the neighbourhood. Kshudiram did not scold him for this wilfulness, as other parents would have done, for he now felt convinced that it was this that would ultimately help the boy to become great. And there was good reason for him to think so, since he invariably found that Gadadhar would not rest till he accomplished what he had set out to do, would never try to hide anything he had done by telling a lie; and, would, above all, never think of doing harm to anybody. But there was one thing that really worried Kshudiram. When the boy was asked or forbidden to do anything, he would deliberately go counter to the instruction till it was put to him in a way that appealed to his heart and understanding. Kshudiram understood that this really showed the boy's desire to know the why and wherefore of everything; but he realized that people would not normally tolerate such behaviour, nor take the trouble to satisfy the boy's curiosity by telling him the reason for everything. As a result, he thought, it was possible that the boy might occasionally be led to ignore the conventional rules of good

conduct. It was the occurrence, at that time, of a small incident which gave rise to this apprehension of Kshudiram. It also made him understand the working of the boy's mind, and he began carefully to guide him accordingly.

9. An incident indicating it

There is a big tank known as Haldarpukur, by the side of Kshudiram's house. All the villagers used its clear pure water for bathing, drinking, cooking, etc. It had two bathing Ghats, one for men and the other for women. Young boys like Gadadhar would very often use the Ghat reserved for women. Coming one day for a bath to that Ghat with a few boys of his own age, Gadadhar started jumping and swimming in the water and made himself a nuisance to the women who had come there to bathe. Elderly women who were occupied with their daily prayers and other devotions found that, now and then, a little water was splashed over them. They told the boys to stop, but the boys would not listen. Annoyed at this, one of the women scolded them saying, "Why do you come here? Can't you go to the men's Ghat? Here women wash their clothes after their bath. You should know that women must not be seen undressed." Gadadhar asked, "Why not?" But, instead of making him understand, she began to scold him all the more. Seeing that the women were annoyed and fearing that they would complain to their parents, the boys behaved better. But Gadadhar hit upon a plan. For two or three days, he hid himself behind a tree near the tank and peeped at the women while they were taking their bath. When, later, he met the elderly woman who had scolded him, he told her, "Day before yesterday I saw four women bathing, yesterday six and today eight. But I find that nothing has happened to me!" She thereupon came to Chandra and told her laughingly what the boy had said. At an opportune moment, Chandra spoke to Gadadhar gently, but in a convincing manner: "It is true nothing will happen to you when you do that; only the women feel insulted. They are in no way different from me; and so, if you insult them, it is the same as insulting me. In future don't do anything that would hurt their sense of honour. Is it right to wound their feelings, as well as mine?" The boy understood and never again behaved that way.

10. The progress and range of Gadadhar's education

To resume the story, Gadadhar's progress at school was not bad. Within a short time he could read and write in a simple way. But his aversion to arithmetic continued. On the other hand, he became more and more adroit in imitating others and showed his originality in various ways. Seeing the village potters making images of gods and goddesses, he began to visit them, and learning their art, started practising it at home. It became one of his hobbies. Similarly he mixed with those who painted pictures and himself began to do so. Whenever he was told that someone was reading and expounding the Puranas in the village, or that a religious drama was being enacted, he would go there and thus come to know the stories from the scriptures. He would, at the same time, observe very minutely the manner of presentation that appealed most to the audience. His wonderful memory and keen insight were of great help in these matters. From that early age his remarkable power of imitation and an inherent sense of fun helped the lively lad to mimic the peculiar gestures of men and women. At the same time the daily example of his parents helped to bring out his innate guilelessness and love of God. When he grew up he remembered this and all his life acknowledged with a grateful heart his debt to his parents. The reader will be able to judge for himself, when he reads the following words which he afterwards said to us at Dakshineswar: " My mother was the very embodiment of simplicity. She did not understand anything of worldly matters and could not count money. Not realizing the danger of saying all the things to all the persons, she would give out whatever came to her mind to anybody and everybody. For this, people called her, 'silly'. She also liked to feed one and all. My father never accepted a gift from a *Sudra.* He spent the greater part of the day in worship, Japa, and meditation. When at the time of his daily prayers he would recite the invocation to Gayatri, 'O shining One, O giver of boons, come, etc.' his chest would expand, become flushed and be bathed in tears. When not engaged in worship or other religious practices he spent his time making flower garlands, with the help of thread and needle, to adorn Raghuvir. Fear of giving false evidence made him give up his parental homestead. The villagers paid him the respect and reverence due to a sage."

11. The boy's courage

As days went by, the boy's remarkable courage also began to show itself in various ways. Without the least fear he went to places where even elderly persons dared not go for fear of ghosts, ghouls, and the like. His father's sister Ramsila would sometimes be possessed by the spirit of the goddess Sitala. She then became, as it were, a different person. Once about this time, when she was staying with her brother at Kamarpukur, that change came over her and everyone in the house regarded her with awe and devotion. But Gadadhar watched his aunt in that state, no doubt with reverence, but without the slightest fear. He stayed near, and observed very minutely the change that had come over her. Afterwards, he said: "It would be splendid if the spirit who possessed aunt would possess me."

12. The boy's aptitude for making friends

The reader is already acquainted with Manikraja, the landlord of the village of Bhursubo, who was known for his charity and devotion. Attracted by Kshudiram's pious nature, he became his intimate friend. One day Gadadhar, then a boy of six, was taken by his father to Manikraja's house. He behaved towards everybody in that house as if they were his old friends; and was so natural and sweet that he became dear to them all from that very day. Manikraja's brother Ramjay, was so charmed that he said to Kshudiram: "Friend, this son of yours is not an ordinary child. It seems to me that he possesses godly qualities in a marked degree. Whenever you come this way, please bring him along. I feel so happy to see him." For various reasons, Kshudiram could not go again to Manikraja's place for some time. So Manikraja sent one of the women of his family to find out the reason and to bring Gadadhar on a short visit to Bhursubo if it were possible. When his father asked whether he would like to go, the boy was happy and went with the woman. He returned to Kamarpukur before dusk with presents of various kinds of sweets and ornaments. Gadadhar became such a pet of that Brahmin family that they used to send for him whenever Kshudiram could not go to Bhursubo for some days.

13. The remarkable development of Gadadhar's power of imagination

Gradually a year went by and Gadadhar was now seven. As the child's sweet nature developed, everybody loved him more and more. Whenever the women of the village prepared any delicacies in their homes, their first thought was now to get the boy eat some of them. His playmates never felt happy till they had shared their food with him. He had such charming ways and spoke and sang so sweetly that the neighbours cheerfully put up with his childish pranks. About this time an incident occurred which made Gadadhar's parents and friends very anxious about the boy. By the grace of God, Gadadhar was born with a strong and robust constitution, and until now he had not suffered from any disease. As a result, he was wonderfully buoyant and cheerful like a free bird. Well-known physicians say that it is the absence of body-consciousness that is the sign of health. It was this kind of health that the boy enjoyed from his birth. Whenever his mind, which was naturally one-pointed, became absorbed in a particular object, his body-consciousness almost vanished and he became completely identified with the idea on which he set his mind. The enchanting view of the vast green fields fanned by the gentle breeze, the incessant flow of the river, the melodious songs of birds, and, above all, the magic of ever-changing clouds in the deep blue sky would, at times, unfold their mystery and glory to the boy's inner vision and hold him spell-bound. He would then lose himself completely and enter the unknown, distant, and solitary domain of the spirit. The experience we now relate also had its origin in the boy's tendency towards the spiritual contemplation of beauty. One day, while roaming carefree in the fields, Gadadhar looked up at the sky and saw a newly formed dark cloud, and against it the rhythmic movement of a flock of cranes in full flight, with their snow-white wings outspread. The boy became so completely absorbed in the beauty of it all, that awareness of his own body and of all other earthly things vanished altogether, and he fell down unconscious.[1] His friends, finding him in that condition, were alarmed and distressed. They sent word to his parents and the boy was carried home from the field. As soon as he regained consciousness, he was his old self again. Naturally, this incident caused a lot of worry to Kshudiram and Chandradevi and they thought of various means to prevent its happening again. In fact they thought it to be the beginning of fainting

fits and considered what remedy should be applied and whether propitiatory rites should be performed. But Gadadhar told them, again and again, that what had happened to him was really due to his being merged in a feeling he had never experienced before; and that, although he was found outwardly unconscious, he was conscious inwardly and had experienced a unique bliss. However, as it did not recur and as nothing was wrong with the boy's health, Kshudiram thought that it was due to a fit. But Chandra felt convinced that the boy had come under the evil eye. Anyhow, they kept him away from school for some time. Free to go wherever he chose in the village, the boy gave himself to play and fun even more than before.

14. The autumn festival in connection with the worship of Durga at Ramchandra's house

Gadadhar was about seven years and a half at the time of the great autumn festival of Bengal in 1843. The reader already knows Ramchandra Bandyopadhyaya, Kshudiram's prosperous nephew. He used to spend most of his time at Medinipur as he made his living there. His paternal home was in the village of Selampur, where his family lived. There, every year, Ramchandra celebrated the great autumn festival at a great expense. We have heard from Hriday that for eight days at the time of worship the Selampur house used to ring with music and song. The family experienced a continuous flow of joy in feeding Brahmins, offering parting gifts to Pandits, feeding the poor and giving them clothes. On those occasions Ramchandra would bring his revered uncle to his house and spend some happy days with him. That year, also, Kshudiram and his family were cordially invited when the time came.

15. Kshudiram and Ramkumar go to Ramchandra's house

Kshudiram had almost completed his sixty-eighth year, and had now lost his former vigour on account of dyspepsia and dysentery from which he had suffered often in the previous few years. So in spite of his desire to go, he hesitated to accept his dear nephew's loving invitation. He began to feel an unaccountable but strong disinclination to leave his humble cottage, his

family, and especially Gadadhar, even for a few days. Then he thought: “If I do not go this year, who knows whether, with my increasing weakness, I shall be able to go there again?” He at first intended to take Gadadhar with him; but then he remembered that this would make Chandra very anxious. As he could not take Gadadhar, he finally decided to go with his eldest son Ramkumar, spend the few days of worship with Ramchandra, and then return. He paid homage to Raghuvir, bade good-bye to all, kissed Gadadhar and started for Selampur a few days before the commencement of the festival. Ramchandra was very happy at the arrival of his revered uncle and his cousin Ramkumar.

16. Kshudiram’s illness and death

Kshudiram had a relapse of his old complaint, dysentery, immediately after reaching Selampur and was placed under treatment. But that did not interfere with the happy mood in which the sixth, seventh, and eighth days of the bright fortnight were spent. On the ninth day, however, Kshudiram’s illness suddenly took a serious turn and caused great anxiety in that mart of joy. Ramchandra called in efficient doctors and started nursing his uncle with the help of his sister Hemangini and cousin Ramkumar. But Kshudiram’s condition did not improve. The ninth day passed somehow; and now came the tenth day (Vijaya), especially sacred to the Hindus as the time of re-union. That day Kshudiram became so weak that it was difficult for him to speak at all. As soon as the immersion ceremony of the image of Durga was over in the afternoon, Ramchandra hastened back to his uncle’s bedside. He found that the last moment was drawing near. On inquiry he learnt that Kshudiram had been lying silent in the same condition for a long time. Then Ramchandra, in tears, said to him: “Uncle, you always take the name of Raghuvir; why don’t you do so now?” The sound of that name at once roused Kshudiram, and in a trembling, halting voice he said: “Is that you, Ramchandra? Have you come after immersing the image? Then, make me sit up.” When Ramchandra, Hemangini and Ramkumar had helped him, with great care, to sit up on the bed, Kshudiram in a solemn tone uttered the name of Raghuvir thrice and left his body—the drop of water mingled with the ocean. Lord Raghuvir merged the breath of life of the devotee in His

infinite life and thus blessed His devotee with immortality and peace everlasting. At dead of night, the village rang with the loud singing of the praises of the divine Lord. Kshudiram's body was then brought to the river bank and, after consecration by fire, was cremated. The news reached Kamarpukur the next day, and filled Kshudiram's happy abode with sorrow. When the period of mourning was over, Ramkumar performed the Sraddha ceremony as prescribed by the scriptures and fed many Brahmins, thus completing his father's last rites. It is said that Ramchandra gave a large sum towards the expenses of the ceremony performed in honour of the departed spirit of his uncle.

Footnote

1. For the Master's own description vide II 2.

CHAPTER VII
GADADHAR'S BOYHOOD

1. The effect of Kshudiram's death on the family

Kshudiram's death affected the life of the family in many ways. He had been Chandra's companion in weal and woe for forty-four long years. It was therefore natural that now she found the world empty without him and felt his loss every moment. She had been accustomed for long to taking refuge at the lotus feet of Raghuvir, and now that the world had no more attraction for her, her whole mind was always drawn in that direction. But the world would not release her till the time was ripe. It gradually drew her back to the joys and sorrows of daily life through her concern for her seven-year-old son Gadadhar and her four-year-old daughter Sarvamangala. Thus the sorrow-stricken Chandra somehow passed her days in the service of Raghuvir and in bringing up her youngest son and daughter. After the father's demise, the entire responsibility of maintaining the family fell on the shoulders of Ramkumar who had been devoted to his father. Now, as he could not afford to waste any time in grief, his whole mind and energy were employed in seeing that his bereaved mother and little brother and sister did not lack anything. The younger brother, Rameswar, now eighteen years old, was expected to help the family by earning money as soon as he had finished the study of Smriti and Jyotisha; and Ramkumar himself had to try to better the condition of the family by adding to his own income. His capable wife, finding that Chandradevi was no longer able to cope with all the work, took upon herself most of the cooking and other household duties.

2. The effect of his father's death on Gadadhar's mind

It is common experience that nothing makes life so empty as the loss of a mother in one's infancy, the death of a father in childhood, and the loss of a wife in youth. Being entirely dependent on the mother's care and love, the infant does not miss its father even if he dies. But when it grows up and there is an awakening of its intelligence, it daily becomes aware of the father's special affection. The child's heart begins to be drawn towards the father as soon as it finds that he alone can satisfy certain desires which even its fond mother cannot. Its feeling of loss is therefore very acute, if the father dies at that time. Gadadhar too felt likewise when Kshudiram died. Many little things reminded him daily of his father, and a deep sorrow lingered in his heart. But being more thoughtful and considerate than other boys of his age, Gadadhar never openly gave way to his sorrow, out of regard for his mother's feelings. To all appearances, the boy was as full of mirth and merriment as ever. Although he was seen sometimes wandering alone in the Bhutir Khal cremation-ground or in Manikraja's mango grove and other solitary spots, nobody thought that there was any other reason for this than a boy's natural restlessness. But actually, Gadadhar was becoming more thoughtful and fond of solitude. He also studied the ways of various persons and observed everyone very minutely.

3. Gadadhar's behaviour towards his mother

Those who have suffered and feel the same loss equally come closer to one another. That is perhaps the reason why Gadadhar now felt especially drawn towards his mother. He stayed near her much longer than before, and took delight in helping her as far as he could, in the service of the gods and in her household duties. It did not take him long to notice that when he was with her, his mother almost forgot the loss she had suffered. The boy's attitude towards his mother also showed some change. After his father's death he never asked her for anything with the same insistence as before, for he realized that her sorrow would return and she would be most unhappy if she could not fulfil any of his desires. In short, the yearning to protect his mother in every way now arose in Gadadhar's heart.

4. Gadadhar's doings at this time. His keeping company with holy men

Gadadhar started going to school again and doing his regular lessons. But now he enjoyed, more than ever before, listening to the recital of stories from the Puranas and to Yatra songs, and making images of gods and goddesses. He perhaps also found that his absorption in these things helped him to forget the loss of his father. The boy found at this time a new interest suited to his temperament. The Lahas had set aside, for the convenience of pilgrims, a house situated at the south-east corner of the village, on the road to Puri. Religious men, unattached to worldly things, often took shelter at that house on their way to Puri to pay obeisance to Lord Jagannath, and also on their way back home. While staying there, they came to the village to collect alms from different houses. Gadadhar knew from the Puranas that monks, after acquiring detachment, renounce this transitory world and yearn for a vision of the divine Lord. The boy's own feeling about the transitoriness of the world had been strengthened since his father's demise. He had also heard that association with holy men leads to the blessedness of ultimate peace. And so he now began to visit that pilgrim-house, whenever he could, to become acquainted with the monks. He would then observe how those men sat round the Dhuni (sacred fire), and made it blaze up, morning and evening, before they became absorbed in the meditation of God; how they offered the simple food obtained as alms to their chosen Deities and then ate it with relish; how, with absolute dependence on God, they tried to bear even severe illness patiently; how they refrained from disturbing anybody even for expressing their urgent needs. But he also discovered how, sometimes, hypocrites dressed like monks assumed their manner of living only for their own selfish ends, and trampled upon the very essentials of right conduct. Gradually he began to mix intimately with genuine monks by helping them in little things like collecting wood or fetching drinking water. They, in turn, developed a liking for this good-looking lad on account of his sweet ways, and taught him how to pray to, and sing the praises of, the divine Lord. They also instructed him in other religious matters and felt happy in sharing with him the food they had collected as alms. Of course, Gadadhar could mix this way only with those monks who, for one reason or another, spent a considerable time at the pilgrim-house.

5. How Chandra devi's fear in this connection was removed

When the boy was eight years old, a few monks stayed at the pilgrim-house for many days to rest after the severe fatigue of a long journey or for some such reason. Gadadhar mixed with them in his usual way and soon became dear to them. At first, no one knew about this; but when the boy's relations with the monks became intimate and he began to spend much time with them, many came to know of it. On some days he ate so much with them that when he returned home, he had no appetite for any food. When Chandradevi asked him the reason, he told her everything. At first the mother was not perturbed. On the contrary, the fact that he had won the hearts of the mendicants appeared to her a blessing, and she began sending with the boy food-stuff and other articles necessary for them. But it so happened afterwards that the boy came home, sometimes with sacred ashes covering his body or with emblems marked on his forehead; at other times, wearing like monks a 'Kaupina' and a loin-cloth made by tearing his own wearing cloth. He would then say, "Look mother, how the holy men have adorned me!" This development made Chandra very uneasy, for she was afraid that one day the mendicants might tempt her son to go away with them. She expressed her fear to Gadadhar and began to weep. In spite of all his efforts to remove her fear, he could not pacify her. He then made a resolve not to go to the monks any more, and told her about it. This at last relieved her anxiety. And so, Gadadhar went to the monks to bid them farewell once for all. When they asked him the reason, he told them of his mother's misgivings. On hearing this, they went with him to Chandradevi and assured her that the thought of taking away Gadadhar with them had never even crossed their minds; for, to take away a boy of that tender age, without the permission of his parents, they said, would be stealing, an offence unworthy of any religious man. At this, every shadow of her apprehension left Chandradevi, and she readily agreed to let the boy visit them as before.

6. Gadadhar experienced Bhavasamadhi for the second time

Another event of this period caused Chandra a great deal of anxiety about Gadadhar. Although everyone thought it a sudden occurrence it was actually

the result of the boy's growing propensity for spiritual contemplation and deep thought. One day, on his way to the well-known temple of the goddess Visalakshi, at Anur, a village about two miles north of Kamarpukur, he suddenly lost all external consciousness. Prasannamayi, the pious sister of Dharmadas Laha, who was one of his companions, realized that it was the boy's spiritual awareness that had brought about this unconsciousness.[1] But when Chandradevi heard of it, she became anxious, thinking it was due to some physical malady. But on this occasion also, Gadadhar insisted that he was in that condition only because his mind had become merged in the goddess, as he was contemplating on Her.

7. Gadadhar's bosom-friend Gayavishnu

More than two years went by, and gradually the ups and downs of life made the boy almost forget the loss of his father. We have already mentioned Kshudiram's friend Dharmadas Laha. At this time Gadadhar became an intimate friend of Dharmadas's son, Gayavishnu. The two boys were drawn to each other while at school and during walks. They began to address each other as 'pal' and would daily spend much time together. Gadadhar always took his friend along with him when he was invited and fed by the village women. He would not take any of the sweets and other delicacies prepared by his old nurse Dhani, till he had given a share to Gayavishnu. It is needless to say that Dharmadas and Gadadhar's guardians were happy to see this friendship between the two boys.

8. Description of the ceremony of Gadadhar's Upanayana

When Ramkumar found that Gadadhar would soon complete his ninth year, he started making arrangements for his investiture with the sacred thread (Upanayana). Long before, Dhani who belonged to the blacksmith caste, had told the boy one day that she would consider herself blessed if at the time of his investiture, he would accept alms from her and call her 'mother'. The boy was so touched by her sincere affection for him that he promised to fulfil her desire. Putting her trust in the boy's promise, the poor woman started collecting and accumulating money and other things as best

as she could, and eagerly awaited that happy event. At the proper time Gadadhar mentioned his promise to his eldest brother. But Ramkumar objected, because such a departure from the usual custom was against the family tradition. The boy, on his part, insisted on keeping his promise, and argued that if he yielded to the objection he would be guilty of breaking his promise, and that an untruthful person was not fit to put on the sacred thread. As the time for the investiture ceremony approached, everything was made ready. But it was feared that there would be a hitch in the completion of the ceremony because of Gadadhar's insistence. When the news reached his ears, Dharmadas tried to reconcile the difference. He said to Ramkumar, "Although this has never so far happened in your family, it has been done in many good Brahmin families elsewhere. Therefore no blame attaches to those who permit it. You must also consider the question of satisfying Gadadhar's conscience and his peace of mind." At these words of their father's friend, wise old Dharmadas, Ramkumar and others refrained from raising further objections. Gadadhar then, with a cheerful heart, put on the sacred thread in accordance with the scriptural injunctions and applied his mind to performing Sandhya, worship, etc., as befits a Brahmin. From now onwards, Dhani also considered her life to be blessed on account of her new relationship with the boy. A little after this, the boy entered upon his tenth year.

9. Gadadhar solved a disputed point at a meeting of scholars

About this time the villagers were wonderstruck at an event which showed Gadadhar's unique, heaven-born genius.[1] A big meeting of scholars had been convened at the house of the Lahas during the performance of a Sraddha ceremony. At this meeting there arose a controversy regarding a complicated theological question and the scholars could not arrive at a correct solution of the disputed point. Gadadhar, who was present, solved the problem in such a way that, after hearing what he said, the scholars praised and blessed him heartily.

10. The development of Gadadhar's spiritual faculties: Bhavasamadhi for the third time

After he had put on the sacred thread, Gadadhar, with his innate spiritual tendency, was delighted to get an opportunity to do something after his own heart. The boy had heard how the living symbol of Raghuvir had shown itself to his father in a dream, and how it had first entered the house; also how, from the auspicious day of the god's coming, their little bit of land had begun to yield an abundance of paddy, which removed all the wants of the family and enabled the kind-hearted Chandradevi to feed every day those who came to her door. Since then the boy had looked upon that family deity with great devotion and reverence. Now that he had the privilege of touching and worshipping that god, his heart was filled with a new fervour of devotion. Much time was now spent by him daily in worship and meditation, after concluding the customary daily prayers and other duties. He served Raghuvir with especial steadfastness and devotion, so that the god might show his pleasure, as he had done to his father, by blessing him with his visions, and giving him commands from time to time. The god Rameswar Siva and the goddess Sitala also received his service. It was not long before his intense devotion bore fruit. The pure heart of the boy became so absorbed in that worship, that he experienced the state of Bhava-samadhi or Savikalpa-samadhi.[1] And after this experience, various spiritual visions came to him from time to time. He had this kind of Samadhi and vision on the Siva-ratri[2] of that year.[3]

The boy fasted that day and worshipped with intense devotion the great God Siva, the origin of all the gods. His friend Gayavishnu and some other boys of his age were also fasting and had decided to keep a vigil that night seeing and listening to a drama depicting the glory of Siva; That drama was to be staged in the house of their neighbour Sitanath Pyne. After finishing the worship of the first quarter, Gadadhar was sitting merged in the contemplation of Siva, when his friends suddenly came and told him that he would have to act the part of Siva and speak a few words in the play at the house of the Pynes; for, they explained, the person who usually played that role had suddenly taken ill and was unable to appear. Gadadhar at first declined on the ground that it would interfere with his worship; but they brushed aside the objection arguing that, if he acted the part of Siva, he would have to think of Him all the time, which was as good as worship. Moreover, they said, his refusal would deprive very many people of

entertainment: they also were fasting and had decided to keep vigil the whole night witnessing the drama. Won over by these arguments, Gadadhar agreed finally and appeared on the stage in the role of Siva. With his make-up of matted hair, Rudraksha beads and ashes, he became so merged in the thought of Siva, that he lost all external consciousness. As he did not come to his senses for a long time, the play had to be stopped for the night.

11. Gadadhar experienced repeated Bhavasamadhi

From now onwards, Gadadhar was in this kind of ecstasy from time to time. He would forget himself and his surroundings when meditating, or listening to songs, music, etc., in praise of gods and goddesses. Then his mind would remain indrawn for a time—short or long—during which it would not respond to any external stimulus. On occasions, when his absorption became very deep, he would appear like a lifeless statue.

When that state was over, he would say, if questioned, that he experienced a marvellous joy in having divine visions while meditating on some god or goddess or listening to songs glorifying them. All this caused much alarm to Chandra and other members of the family for a long time. But their fear passed away when they found that the boy's health was not affected in any way, and that he was efficient in all kinds of work and was always happy. Gadadhar was now so often in this condition, that he gradually got accustomed to it and could almost control it as he wished. It helped him also to understand subtle matters and various truths about gods and goddesses. This made him very happy and he was never afraid of experiencing that state. His spiritual tendencies became especially strong and he began to join heartily in various religious functions of the village, whether in honour of Hari or Siva or Manasa or Dharma. His broad-mindedness not only kept him entirely free from any ill-feeling against devotees of different gods and goddesses, but he was quite friendly with them all. The established tradition of the village no doubt helped him in this matter. For, in contrast to other villages, people of all denominations in Kamarpukur —whether worshippers of Vishnu, or devotees of Siva, or votaries of Dharma—bore no ill-will towards one another, but lived in peace and amity.

12. The reason for Gadadhar's aversion to being at school

Although, as we have seen, there was considerable progress so far as Gadadhar's religious tendencies were concerned, he never developed a liking for book-learning. When he saw the longing of learned scholars for worldly enjoyment and wealth, he became averse to acquiring knowledge like them. For, his keen insight made him first ascertain the motives underlying all actions and then judge their value by the standard of his father's good qualities like detachment from the world, devotion to God, truthfulness, righteous conduct, etc. That comparison revealed, to his surprise, that the goal of most people was entirely different from that of his father. But he felt more sad than surprised to find that such people always suffered from delusion because they looked upon this transitory world as permanent. Is it then to be wondered at, that, as a result of this discovery, there arose in his mind a desire to conduct his own life differently? After hearing all this, the reader may perhaps ask: "Is it possible for a boy of eleven or twelve to have such profound insight and discrimination?" The answer is that Gadadhar was not an ordinary boy. He was born with extraordinary genius, memory and mental impressions. Therefore the possession of such powers was not surprising in his case, though he was so young. But this apart, we must, for the sake of truth, narrate all facts that our investigation has brought to light, irrespective of what others may think of them.

13. The progress of Gadadhar's education

Although Gadadhar's dislike for the prevailing type of education gradually increased, he nevertheless continued going to school. He became proficient in reading books written in his mother tongue and in writing in that language. He now read the *Ramayana,* the *Mahabharata* and other religious books with such devotion and in such a sweet voice that people were charmed to listen. The simple-hearted, unlettered villagers showed great eagerness to hear him read those books, and Gadadhar was always happy to please them. Sitanath Pyne, Madhu Jugi, and others invited him to their houses, and men and women, full of devotion, heard him read the life

of Prahlada, the story of Dhruva, or other narratives from the *Ramayana,* the *Mahabharata,* and similar other texts.

Besides the *Ramayana,* the *Mahabharata,* etc., there still exist in Kamarpukur records containing the stories of gods and goddesses written in simple verse by the village poets well known in those parts. Stories such as the story of the appearance of the great god, Tarakesvar; or of the musical composition relating to Yogadya; or of Madanmohan of Vana-vishnupur describing those gods and goddesses revealing their true natures to holy men and devotees and performing supernatural deeds—reached Gadadhar's ears from time to time. With the help of his extraordinary memory, the boy learnt by heart many of these stories on hearing them, and would sometimes himself copy any available manuscript or printed book containing them. We came to know this when we found, on investigation at the Kamarpukur house, the manuscript *Ramakrishnayana,* the musical compositions on Yogadya and Subahu, etc., copied by Gadadhar himself. It is also beyond doubt that many a time the boy read or recited these narratives to the simple-hearted men and women of the village, whenever they requested him to do so.

We have already spoken of Gadadhar's indifference to arithmetic. But after he had been at school for some time, he made a little progress in that subject also. We are told that he committed to memory tables even up to that of land-measurement called Katha in the Book of Tables, and that he progressed from simple addition to simple multiplication and division. But when he reached his tenth year and began to experience ecstasy, his eldest brother Ramkumar left him free to go to school whenever he wanted and to learn whatever subjects he liked. For, he was afraid that Gadadhar had a tendency to some ailments. His teacher also did not press him when he found he was not making progress in the study of a particular subject. It is therefore needless to add that there was little general progress in Gadadhar's studies at school.

14. The marriages of Rameswar and of Sarvamangala

Two years passed and Gadadhar reached his twelfth year. His second elder brother Rameswar and his younger sister Sarvamangala, were now

twenty-two and nine years old respectively. Finding that Rameswar had reached the proper age, Ramkumar arranged his marriage with the sister of Ramsaday Bandyopadhyaya of the village of Gaurhati near Kamarpukur. It was also arranged that Ramsaday himself should marry Rameswar's sister. As both the marriages were arranged in this manner, Ramkumar had no anxiety about the payment of dowry to the bride's party. Another important event concerning Ramkumar's family took place at this time. As his wife did not conceive, even though she was no longer young, everyone felt certain that she was barren. But now, when they found that she was really pregnant, the family felt happy and apprehensive at the same time, because some of them had heard Ramkumar say that she would die if ever she conceived.

15. Change in the behaviour of Ramkumar's wife when she became pregnant

A radical change came over Ramkumar's affairs from the time his wife conceived. The sources of his income now failed. His health broke down and he was not able to keep up his former active habits. His wife's behaviour also underwent a complete change. There was a rule in the family, from the time of his revered father, that no one (except boys not yet invested with the sacred thread, and those who were ill) should eat anything or even drink water before the worship of Raghuvir was finished. Now Ramkumar's wife broke this rule and turned a deaf ear to the objections raised by other members of the family who were afraid that evil might befall them. She picked quarrels with everyone in the family over trifles, thereby creating ill-feeling, and persisted in her perverse conduct in spite of the protests of her husband and Chandradevi. But remembering that a change often comes over women during their pregnancy, they let her alone. Yet, instead of the usual peace in that pious household at Kamarpukur, there was now continual disharmony.

16. Change in Ramkumar's financial condition

Ramkumar’s brother, Rameswar, was not good at earning money though he had sufficient learning. So, while the number of persons in the family increased, there was a decrease in its income, and its former comfortable existence came to an end. Ramkumar became anxious but could not find a remedy in spite of all his efforts. It seemed as if some unseen power obstructed all his plans and brought them to nothing. A succession of anxieties made his very life a burden. As days and months passed, and the time of his wife’s delivery approached, he became more and more dejected remembering his previous reading of her fate.

17. Ramkumar’s wife died after delivering a son

At last she gave birth to a very beautiful male child some time in the year 1849 and while looking at its face passed away in the lying-in room. A pall of grief again fell over the poor family.

Footnote

1. For a description in detail of this event, vide II. 2.—Tr.

1. For a detailed description of this event, vide III. 4.

1. Vide Glossary.

2. A night associated with a special manifestation of Siva.—Tr.

3. Seen II. 2.

CHAPTER VIII
ON THE THRESHOLD OF YOUTH

1. Ramkumar started a Sanskrit school (Tol) in Calcutta

Ramkumar's misfortune continued after the death of his wife, and he became poorer day by day. His income from gifts given by persons who invited him on ceremonial occasions dwindled. Although paddy sufficient for their own use grew in the piece of land at Lakshmijala, it became more and more difficult to get clothes and other daily necessaries. Milk was also needed every day for his old mother and Akshay, his motherless baby; but it had to be obtained along with other necessaries, only by borrowing money. Thus Ramkumar got into debts which began to accumulate day by day. He could not avoid this, try as he would. Thinking he might be able to earn more money elsewhere, he made preparations to leave Kamarpukur on the advice of his friends. His recent bereavement made it easy for him to take this step; for, he thought that he might get some peace of mind if he left the house crowded with memories of his companion in life for thirty years. There was much discussion as to whether Calcutta or Burdwan offered better prospects of earning an income. Finally it was decided that he should go to Calcutta, because his friends pointed out that Maheshchandra Chattopadhyaya of Sihar, Ramdhan Ghosh of Desra and others whom he knew had gone there and found good opportunities to earn money and improve their condition. They also added that, as everyone knew, those persons could not approach him in learning, intelligence and strength of character. Therefore Ramkumar handed over the charge of the family affairs to Rameswar and went to Calcutta soon after his wife's death. He started a Sanskrit school in the quarter of the city called Jhamapukur and began to teach a few boys.

2. The effect of the death of Ramkumar's wife on the family

There came many changes in the life of the family at Kamarpukur on the death of Ramkumar's wife. Chandradevi was now compelled to take upon herself the burden of all the household duties, including the care of Ramkumar's little child, Akshay. Rameswar's wife tried, as far as possible, to assist her; but being still very young, she was not of much help. So Chandradevi had to do practically everything herself— the service of Raghuvir, the bringing up of Akshay, the cooking and other house-hold work. It took her all the day to do this and she had not a minute's rest. It was very difficult for her, a woman of fifty-eight,[1] to manage all those household affairs. But knowing that such was the will of Raghuvir, she carried on without a word of complaint.

3. The story of Rameswar

Rameswar had now to look after the income and expenses of the family, and was thinking how he could make both ends meet and keep the family in comfort. But his learning never helped him to make a good living. On the other hand, he spent much time in talking to the wandering monks and religious men, whenever he met them, and even did not hesitate to supply all their wants. So, although he now earned a little more than before, he could not pay off the family debt but could just supply only the bare needs of his people. As a result, though he had the necessity to save money he could not do so. He sometimes spent more than he earned and lived a carefree life, thinking, "Somehow Raghuvir will provide for the family."

4. Rameswar's thought about Gadadhar

No doubt, Rameswar dearly loved his younger brother, Gadadhar, but he never bothered to find out whether he made any progress in his studies. Apart from being temperamentally incapable of giving such attention he had no time for it, since he had to go to various places in search of remunerative work. He had thus neither the inclination nor the leisure to keep an eye on his brother's education. He had also the firm conviction that

Gadadhar's discriminating nature would always prevent him from going astray for he had seen in him a remarkable development of religious tendencies even at that early age. This conviction became stronger when he saw how men and women of the village reposed full confidence in the boy and loved him dearly. Nobody, he felt sure, could win all hearts and be praised by everyone unless he was specially good and of noble character. Rameswar looked forward with joy to his young brother's glorious future and had no anxiety on his account. Gadadhar was thirteen years old when Ramkumar went to Calcutta. He had now no regular guardian and was free to go wherever he wanted.

5. Gadadhar's mental attitude and behaviour at this time

As already mentioned, Gadadhar's keen insight enabled him, even at that young age, to see through the motives of the actions of others. Therefore it did not take him long to realize that the only object of studying at school or of gaining distinction in studies was to enable a person to make money, or, as he himself would put it, "to bundle up rice and plantain". He also came to understand that no one who spent all his energy in that pursuit for the sake of worldly enjoyment could, like his father, be devoted to truth, or acquire strength of character and realize God. Blinded by selfish interest, some families in the village quarrelled over land and other property and took to litigation. They then divided their houses, lands, etc., with measureing tapes, declaring, "This side is mine and that side is his." But scarcely had they enjoyed their shares for a few days when death carried them away! Gadadhar sometimes saw these things actually happening before his eyes and came to the conclusion that money and the desire for enjoyment were the root cause of much misery in human life. Therefore, it is not surprising that he became more and more averse to the kind of learning that was acquired only with the object of making money. On the other hand he looked upon the attainment of love of God as the primary aim of life and was content, like his father, with the bare necessaries of life, namely 'coarse food and coarse clothing'. He, however, went to school for a while almost every day, but this was due to his attraction for boys of his own age. He now spent most of his time in the worship of Raghuvir and in

lightening his mother's burden by assisting her in household work. On account of all these activities, he had to remain at home for the greater part of the day.

6. Gadadhar's devotional reading and singing to the women of the village

Since Gadadhar now spent much time at home, the women of the village had good opportunities of seeing him there. When they were free from their household duties, many of them would come to Chandradevi and if they found the boy at home, would sometimes ask him to sing for them or read religious stories. Gadadhar did what they asked, whenever he could. If they found him busy helping his mother, they would themselves finish up the work to afford him time to read out to them from the Puranas or to sing. This became almost a daily routine. The women enjoyed it so much that they tried to finish off their own daily duties as soon as they could, so that they might listen to his songs and readings for a longer time.

Besides reading the Puranas, Gadadhar entertained the women in various other ways. There were then in the village three parties of Yatra players, one of minstrels (Bauls[1]) and one or two of versifiers (Kavis[2]). Again, as many of the villagers were Vaishnavas, there used to be in their houses readings every evening from the *Bhagavata,* or singing of the praises of the divine Lord. His gift of memory enabled Gadadhar to remember many of those musical compositions, plays, songs and hymns to God which he had heard from his childhood. As a special entertainment, one day he would begin a drama; on another sing the songs of the Bauls or Kavis, or again sing the praises of the divine Lord. When he enacted a play he would himself play the various parts, changing his voice to suit each character. If on any occasion he found his mother or any of the women dejected, he would start playing a farce from the plays; or would imitate so well the peculiar manner, and gestures of some one in the village known to all of them that they would roar with laughter.

7. The village women were devoted to Gadadhar and confided in him

Thus Gadadhar exercised an immense influence over the village women. They had already heard of the strange dream and spiritual visions that the boy's parents had at the time of his birth. And they had also seen with their own eyes the extraordinary change that came over his mind and body whenever he came in touch with the spirit of gods and goddesses. Therefore it was quite natural that his intense devotion to God, his absorption when reading the Puranas, his sweet singing and his unconventional, simple-hearted behaviour towards them all, aroused in those women a unique devotion and affection for him. We are told that Prasannamayi and other elderly women saw in Gadadhar the manifestation of the divine Boy (Gopala) and loved him even more than their own sons. And younger women, believing that he was born as a part of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, looked upon him as their spiritual lover and friend. Many of these women were born in Vaishnava families and a simple poetic faith was the basis of their religion. Therefore it is not incredible that they actually believed this boy of noble mien and character to be God Himself. Because of this faith they would come and tell him, without any reserve, their innermost thoughts and would seek his advice and try to follow it. On such occasions, Gadadhar also behaved with these young women as if he were one of them.[1]

8. Gadadhar in woman's dress

He would sometimes act the parts of well-known female characters and put on woman's dress and ornaments. He did this when, at the request of his women friends, he acted the part of Radharani or of her intimate companion, Vrinda. He would then be exactly like a woman in his gestures, voice and movement. The village women would say that nobody could recognize him then. This shows how minutely the boy had observed the various ways of women. With his love of fun, he would often pass in that disguise in front of men with a pitcher under his arm to fetch water from the Haldarpukur; and no one would ever suspect that he was not a woman!

9. Gadadhar's intimacy with the family of Sitanath Pyne

We have already spoken of Sitanath Pyne, a rich man of the village. He had seven sons and eight daughters, who lived as a joint family in Sitanath's house even after marriage. It is said that such a huge quantity of spices was necessary for cooking their food that ten stone-slabs had to be used to grind them to paste every day. Many distant relatives of Sitanath had also built their houses near his, and lived there. Therefore that part of Kamarpukur was known as the traders' quarter. Being situated near Kshudiram's house, many women of that quarter,— especially Sitanath's wife and daughters— used to come to Chandradevi during their leisure, and thus came to know Gadadhar intimately. They would often take him to their own houses and ask him to play dramatic parts or impersonate certain women characters in woman's dress. Many of Sitanath's women relatives were forbidden to go to any place outside the family house. Therefore they had not the good fortune to listen to Gadadhar's readings and songs at Chandradevi's place. Perhaps that was why Sitanath's wife and daughters invited him to their house. There it was that many women of the traders' quarter, who could not go to Chandradevi, saw Gadadhar and became fond of him. Whenever they heard that he was at Sitanath's house they went there and enjoyed listening to his readings or seeing his acting and impersonations. The master of the house, Sitanath, loved Gadadhar very much and other men of that quarter knew what a fine character the boy possessed. Therefore they did not raise any objection to their womenfolk listening to the boy singing the praises of God.

The only person from the traders' quarter who raised any objection was Durgadas Pyne. He too had a high opinion of Gadadhar and liked him, but he would, under no circumstances, allow any relaxation of the strict purdah system observed by his women. He boasted to Sitanath and other relatives that nobody had ever seen the women of his house, or could know anything about the inner apartments where they lived. He even looked down upon Sitanath and others who did not, like him, enforce purdah.

10. A blow to Durgadas Pyne's pride

One day Durgadas was bragging thus before a relative, when Gadadhar came there. On hearing him the boy said, "Can women be protected by

purdah? They can be protected only through good moral training and devotion to God. I can see everyone and know everything of the inner apartments of your house, if I want to." At this, Durgadas became even more boastful arid said: "Well, let me see how you do it." "Very well, we shall see," challenged Gadadhar and went away.

Some time later, one afternoon, without a word to anyone, the boy disguised himself as a poor weaver woman by putting on a coarse dirty Sari and, among other ornaments a bangle of silver beads on his wrist. Then he came just before dusk to the house of Durgadas from the direction of the market with a basket under his arm and a veil covering his face. Durgadas was then sitting with some friends in the parlour of his house. Gadadhar introduced himself as a weaver woman who had come to the market for selling yarn, but had the misfortune to be left behind by her companions. She therefore begged for shelter for the night Durgadas made enquiries about her, and satisfied with her replies said: "Very well, go to the women in the inner apartment and ask them to take you in." Gadadhar bowed in gratitude and went to the inner apartment. He repeated his story to the women and amused them with his gossip. Seeing her so young, and pleased with her sweet words, the women allowed her to stay with them. Then they pointed out a place for rest and gave her a refreshment of parched rice and parched paddy, husked and sweetened. Gadadhar sat in the allotted place and, while eating, observed very minutely every room and each of the women. Not only did he hear the conversation they were having but took part in it, and sometimes even put questions. The whole evening was spent in this way. As Gadadhar had not returned home, though it was very late, Chandradevi sent Rameswar in search of him to the traders' quarter where, she knew, he often went. Rameswar went first to Sitanath's house, but was told that the boy was not there. Then coming near the house of Durgadas, he loudly called him by his name. When Gadadhar heard his brother's voice, he knew it was very late. He shouted back from the inner apartment, "I am coming, brother!" and ran out to meet Rameswar. It was then that the truth dawned on Durgadas. At first he was a little embarrassed and felt annoyed at the thought that Gadadhar should have befooled him and his family; but the next moment he began to laugh, seeing how well the boy had played his part. When they heard of the incident the next day, Sitanath and other

relatives of Durgadas were glad that Gadadhar had dealt a blow to his conceit. Henceforward the women of Durgadas's inner apartment began to go to Sitanath's house whenever Gadadhar was there.

11. The women of the traders' quarter were devoted to and had faith in Gadadhar

The women of Sitanath's family and of the traders' quarter became so fond of Gadadhar that they would send for him if they did not see him for some days. The boy sometimes went into ecstasy while reading or singing at Sitanath's house; and when they saw this, the women's devotion for him knew no bounds. Many of them, we are told, worshipped the boy when he was in ecstasy, as an embodiment of Sri Gauranga or Sri Krishna. They had a gold flute and various costumes for male and female characters made for his use during impersonations.

12. What Ruk-mini said about Gadadhar

From time to time we had the opportunity of hearing some of these women speak of the influence that the many-sided Gadadhar exerted over them. When some of us, including Swami Ramakrishnananda, went to Kamarpukur in 1893, we met Sitanath Pyne's daughter, Rukmini, who was then about sixty years old. The reader will have a good idea of Gadadhar's influence when we relate what she told us. Pointing to the north, Rukmini said: "Our old house stands yonder. It is now in a dilapidated condition since there is hardly any one of us left. But, when I was seventeen or eighteen, it was the home of a prosperous family. Sitanath Pyne was my father and we were seventeen or eighteen sisters and cousins, including the daughters of my father's elder and younger brothers. Although there were slight differences in our ages, we were all grown-up girls at that time. Gadadhar used to play with us from his childhood and we were great friends. Though he was a big boy then, he continued coming to our house even when we were no longer children and he had free access to our inner apartments. Father loved him very much. He looked upon him as his chosen Deity and had great devotion and respect for him. Some of the people of our

quarter told him, “There are so many grown-up girls in your house and Gadadhar is now a big boy. Why do you allow him still to enter your inner apartments?” He would then reply: “Don’t worry, I know Gadadhar very well”; and they would not dare to say anything more. Ah, how many stories from the Puranas Gadadhar used to tell us, and what fun we had! We used to go on with our household work while listening to those stories almost every day. How can I with one mouth express the great joy we all felt when he was with us? If sometimes he did not come, we would be in great anxiety, thinking he was ill. We had no peace till one of us went to the Brahmin mother (Chandra) on the pretext of bringing water or doing something else, and brought us news. Every word of Gadadhar was like nectar to us. When he did not come to our house, we would spend the whole day talking about him.”

13. All villagers loved Gadadhar

Gadadhar made friends not only with the village women but his many-sided genius and winsome ways brought him in contact with all the people of the village, whether men, women or children. He frequented all the places where the villagers—young and old—gathered to enjoy readings from the Puranas or songs in praise of God. There was great joy whenever and wherever the boy was present; for none but he could read so well, or expound religious truths with such earnestness. He had no equal in spiritual fervour at the time of singing the glory of God and in the power of arousing the spiritual sentiments. No one had a sweet voice like him nor could anyone dance like him. When all were in a merry mood, he surpassed everyone in his ability to play farcical roles and to imitate all kinds of affectation of men and women. Again, no one could narrate so well new stories or sing new songs fitting the occasion. So everyone, young and old, became fond of him and eagerly awaited his coming each evening. Gadadhar too was happy to meet and entertain the villagers, sometimes in one place, sometimes in another.

As even at that age the boy had a sound judgement, many of the villagers took his advice in the solution of their worldly problems. Attracted by his pure character and seeing that he went into ecstasy while uttering God’s

name or singing His praises, religious-minded persons were helped in their own spiritual paths by following his advice.[1] Only hypocrites and knaves tried to avoid him, since Gadadhar's keen insight pierced through their deceptive exterior and detected their secret designs. The truthful and outspoken boy sometimes put these persons out of countenance by exposing them before others. Gadadhar's love of fun would also occasionally make him imitate their hypocritical ways in the presence of others. Although this made them angry, they could not do anything about it, since everybody took his side. Their only safeguard was to appeal to his kind nature, because they knew the boy was always generous to those who took refuge in him.

14. Why Gadadhar became averse to a bread-winning education

As mentioned before, Gadadhar continued going to school for some time every day, because of his love for boys of his own age. But on his reaching the age of fourteen, his devotion and desire for spiritual contemplation increased to such an extent that he became convinced that he had no use for any bread-winning education of the type imparted at school. Even from that time, he felt that his life was meant for a higher purpose and that he would have to direct all his energies towards the realization of God. A faint picture of that goal often arose before his mental vision; but as it was not yet developed in all its details, he was unable to grasp its meaning or to understand its purpose. Nevertheless, whenever the problem of how he should direct his life arose in his mind, his discriminating intellect pointed to an absolute dependence on God and painted in bright colours on the canvas of his imagination a symbolic picture of ochre cloth, sacred fire, food obtained as alms and a wandering life free from all attachments. But the very next moment, his loving heart reminded him of the condition of his mother, brother and others of the family, and made him give up the desire to tread that path. Instead, it urged him to help them, as best he could, by remaining in the world trusting God, even as his father had done. Since his head and his heart thus pointed in opposite directions, he waited for God's guidance, depending entirely on what Raghuvir might dispose, for with his heart full of love for that god, the boy had always looked upon him as absolutely his own. Confident, therefore, that Raghuvir would solve his

problems at the proper time he had no longer any doubt. Whenever there was a conflict between his head and heart, it was his heart that always won, and he now did everything under its influence.

15. The natural urge of Gadadhar's heart

At this time a new feeling welled up, now and then, in Gadadhar's pure heart, full of a rare sympathy. There existed such an intimate relationship between him and the people of the village that he looked upon them as his dear friends and shared fully their joys and sorrows. Therefore, as soon as the idea of renouncing the world arose in his mind, his heart reminded him of those simple-hearted and loving villagers and of their implicit trust in him. He knew his path was to conduct his own life in such a way that by following him as a model, they might realize high ideals and transform their present relationship with him into one that was always spiritual. The boy's heart, free from the slightest taint of selfishness, spoke to him: "It is selfish to renounce the world only for your own salvation. Do something that will be for the good of others also."

16. Gadadhar left school and took to enacting dramas with the help of friends

But so far as his study at the school and later at the Sanskrit school was concerned, Gadadhar's head and heart were in full agreement. Even then he did not leave school altogether because he knew his friends would miss him badly. For, all the boys of his own age, Gayavishnu and others, loved him dearly and looked upon him as their leader because of his great intelligence and courage. Gadadhar, however, found at last a favourable opportunity to leave the school. One day some friends who knew his dramatic talent proposed that they should form a party of Yatra players and requested him to take charge of their training. Gadadhar agreed; but knowing that their guardians would raise objection, the boys were at first worried about a suitable place where they could undergo that training. Clever Gadadhar finally selected Manikraja's mango grove, and it was settled that every day

some of them should absent themselves from school to meet there at the appointed time.

This plan was immediately put into effect. Under Gadadhar's training the boys learnt by heart their own parts and songs, and the mango grove became the happy scene of the performance of the plays depicting the lives of Sri Ramachandra and Sri Krishna. All the details of each performance had to be arranged by Gadadhar with the aid of his own imagination, and he himself had to act the parts of the principal characters. The boys, however, were very happy to find their little group working in perfect harmony. It is said that, from time to time, Gadadhar went into ecstasy during these performances.

17. Gadadhar's progress in painting and making images of deities

The boy's skill in painting could not now find much opportunity for improvement, since most of his time was spent either in religious singing or in enacting plays. But one day, on a visit to his youngest sister Sarvamangala at Gaurhati, he saw her cheerfully serving her husband. Shortly afterwards, he painted a picture showing the couple in that happy mood, and all the members of the family were surprised to see how lifelike the painting was.

Gadadhar, however, became very competent in moulding images of gods and goddesses. His religious tendency led him to do this often, and he and his friends would then worship those images in the manner prescribed in the scriptures.

After he left school, Gadadhar followed the dictates of his heart by engaging himself in these activities, besides helping Chandradevi in her household work.

He became very fond of Akshay, his brother's motherless child, who very often kept him busy. In order to allow Chandradevi time for her household duties, it now became a part of his daily routine to take the child on his lap and keep it amused in various ways.

Three years went by in this way and Gadadhar approached his seventeenth year. Through Ramkumar's exertions, the number of students in

his Calcutta school had increased during this period and he was now earning more than before.

18. Ramkumar was anxious about Gadadhar and took him to Calcutta

Although he spent most of his time in Calcutta, Ramkumar used to come once a year to Kamarpukur, for a few weeks, to see how things were going on with his mother and brothers. This time, when he came he particularly noticed Gadadhar's indifference to regular study and was worried about it. He made careful enquiries as to how he spent his time, and after consulting his mother and Rameswar, decided to take Gadadhar with him to Calcutta and keep him there. He thought it advisable to do so, because with the increase in the number of students, the management of his school had become difficult and he felt the need for an assistant. So it was settled that Gadadhar should go to Calcutta to assist him a little, and, at the same time, study under him along with his other pupils. When this was put to Gadadhar he did not raise the slightest objection, because he knew that it meant helping his eldest brother whom he respected like his father. Then, at an auspicious time on a lucky day, Ramkumar and Gadadhar paid homage to Raghuvir, took the dust of their mother's feet and started for Calcutta. There was an end to the mart of joy at Kamarpukur. Chandra and other women devoted to Gadadhar, somehow spent their days with his sweet memory and the thought of his future welfare to sustain them.

Footnote

1. Chandradevi was born l791 and passed away in 1876 at the age of eighty-five. It is said that she died on the birthday of Sri Ramakrishna.

1. Religious mendicants belonging to the cult of love, begging from house to house, singing tender songs of spiritual love and dispassion for the world.—Tr.

2. Quick-witted persons who would compete in putting and answering intricate questions on socio-religious matters from mythology and history—all in impromptu verses.—Tr.

1. It will be seen from the facts recorded in II. 14 what a strong desire Gadadhar had, at the time referred to there, to be completely like a woman.

1. It is said that at that time Srinivas Sankhari and a few other young men worshipped him as an especial manifestation of God.

PART TWO

SRI RAMAKRISHNA
THE GREAT MASTER

AS THE SPIRITUAL ASPIRANT

PREFACE
WHAT THIS PART CONTAINS

By the grace of God the discussion on the unique spiritual practices of Sri Ramakrishna as a spiritual aspirant is now presented to the public. We have not presented here merely a philosophical discussion on his unprecedented love for these Sadhanas and on the principles underlying them, but also tried to ascertain the dates of the principal events of his life from his seventeenth to the fortieth year and to narrate them chronologically to the reader. Therefore this part of the book "As The Spiritual Aspirant" may be regarded as the history of his life as an aspirant down to the time when his boy disciples, with their leader Swami Vivekananda, came to his holy feet.

We entertained great doubts at the time of writing the present part of the book, whether we should be able to ascertain the dates of all the important events of the Master's life. Although he told many of us the facts of his life as a spiritual aspirant, never did he chronologically narrate them to anyone. Consequently, the events of this period of his life have remained confused and complicated in the minds of his devotees. But as a result of investigation we have now been able to ascertain by his grace the dates of many of those events.

There has continued till now a controversy about the year of the Master's birth; for he himself told us that his original horoscope was lost and the one that was cast afterwards was full of errors. We have been able to solve that dispute by consulting a number of almanacs more than a hundred years old. Therefore, it has become easy for us to ascertain the dates of the events of the Master's life. The facts about the Master's worship of Shodasi were not so far known to anyone. It will be easy for the reader to understand that event when he reads this part of the book.

In conclusion, our humble prayer to Him is that the book may receive His blessings and be a source of good to all.

AUTHOR

INTRODUCTION
NEED FOR THE STUDY OF THE LIFE OF A DIVINE INCARNATION AS A SADHAKA

1. Lack of records concerning divine incarnations as aspriants

The study of the religious histories of the world reveals that except in the case of Lord Buddha and Sri Chaitanya, there is little detailed account available of the spiritual disciplines and practices of the incarnations of God as aspirants. In the history of their lives we do not meet with any detailed description of the indomitable zeal and unbounded love which they nurtured in their hearts and with the help of which they proceeded to realize the truth in life. Nor do we come across detailed discussions of the surges of awe and admiration, of pang and pleasure, of hope and despair, alternating with each other, gripped by which, they felt now elated, now dejected, though never allowing the vision of the goal to grow dim even for a moment. Further, we do not find either a natural nexus of cause and effect between their wonderful actions and behaviour during the later parts of their lives, on the one hand, and the education and actions and aspirations of their childhood, youth, etc., on the other. For example, how Lord Sri Krishna, the darling of the Gopis of Vrindavan, became transformed into Sri Krishna, the Lord of Dwaraka and the Resuscitator of religion, is not clearly indicated. Only a fact or two of the wonderfully catholic life of Jesus the Christ before his thirtieth year is known to us. Only the all-conquering preaching peregrinations of Acharya Sankara are recorded. And so it is with all others.

2. Devotees do not like the idea that incarnations are imperfect at any period of their lives

The reason for this is difficult to envisage. Perhaps those things have not been recorded on account of the excessive devotion on the part of the devotees. Perhaps they were hesitant to attribute human imperfections to divine characters, and therefore thought it reasonable to shut them out from people's gaze. Or it may be, the devotees thought that they would be doing more good to men by holding before their eyes as an ideal the fully developed noble ideas and sentiments of these great ones than by tracing the history of their superhuman efforts to arrive at them; and therefore they deemed it useless to place on record those endeavours. The devotees like to see their beloved Master ever perfect. They refuse to admit that because they have assumed human forms, any kind of human weakness, or lack of insight or power could ever creep into their character. They are always anxious to see the whole universe inside the divine children and not only are ever eager to read the experience and intelligence of an adult in the meaningless acts and efforts of their childhood but would strain every nerve to view them as the perfect embodiments of omniscience and omnipotence and of universal love and tolerance. No wonder, therefore, they come to the conclusion that it is only in order to elude the eyes of men that the incarnations of God feign the mental efforts of spiritual practices and the bodily states of hunger, sleep, fatigue, disease, death, etc. Even in our own time we have known many eminent devotees of our Master having the firm conviction that his disease was a feigning of this sort.

3. It does not stand to reason that such an idea interferes with devotion

It is due to mere weakness that the devotees arrive at such a conclusion. They do not like to attribute human efforts, aims, etc., to the incarnations of God only because such a notion, they think, would harm their devotion. Therefore we have nothing to say against them; but such weakness, it is certain, is seen in a devotee when his devotion is not mature enough. It is only in that state of devotion that he cannot think of the divine Lord as devoid of powers. In course of time when devotion matures and the love of God deepens considerably, such thoughts regarding the powers of God are resented as veritable obstacles to the path of devotion and the devotee carefully avoids them from a distance. All the devotional scriptures say this

over and over again. We see that although Sri Krishna's foster mother Yasoda daily experienced the divine powers of her boy, she looked upon him just as a boy and fondled or chastised him accordingly. The Gopis similarly could not attribute any relation to Sri Krishna other than that of a beloved, in spite of their knowledge that he is the very Cause of the universe. Instances can easily be multiplied.

4. The Master's teaching: "Love-relation to the intimacy of 'Thou' and 'I' cannot stand when knowledge of powers intervenes", and "nobody's spiritual attitude should be tampered with"

When the devotees of the Master expressed their great eagerness to have some kind of vision as a direct evidence of particular powers of God, endearingly would he say to them many a time: "Ah, it is not good to have such visions; fear will intervene when you see powers. Feeding and dressing Him and the deep loving relation of 'Thou' and 'I' will all cease." Alas, how often did we not feel piqued on such occasions and think that he evaded our request only because he would not bestow on us the vision! If, however, at that time any devotee took courage and said feelingly with a firm faith, "Your grace can make the impossible possible. Please be compassionate and grant me the vision" the Master would reply in an endearing tone, "Can I bring about anything, my child? What Mother wills, happens;" Thus answered, if he would still insist and say "Your will will be Mother's too" the Master's usual reply was, "My child, I do wish that all of you may have all kinds of spiritual states and visions; but is it fulfilled?" Instead of desisting even then, if the devotee persisted in his faith, the Master only expressed his love to him by a gentle smile and an affectionate look, or would sometimes say, "What shall I say? Let Mother's will be done." But the Master, although pressed so importunately, never tried to break that firm belief of the devotee and destroy his spiritual attitude. Many a time did we see such behaviour on the part of the Master and hear him say, "Ah, the spiritual attitude of no one should be destroyed."

5. An example of the destruction of spiritual attitude on the occasion of the Siva ratri at the Kasipur garden

Although not directly connected with the subject matter of this Introduction, the topic once raised should be explained to the reader with reference to an incident. The power of transmitting to others the capacity to realize spiritual truths by a mere touch or by willing falls to the lot of very few aspirants. The Master told us time and again that Swami Vivekananda in course of time would have the privilege of possessing the power and there with do much good to the people. Such a highly qualified person as the Swami is indeed rare in the world. The Master knew it well from the very beginning of their meeting and started moulding his character and religious life in a special way by imparting the knowledge of the unity of existence spoken of in the Vedanta. Accustomed to the dualistic mode of worship of the Brahmo Samaj, the Swami regarded the non-dualistic mode taught in the Vedanta as a blasphemy. But the Master tried in various ways to make him practise it. The Swami said: "As soon as I went to Dakshineswar, the Master gave me those books which he forbade others to read. Among other books, a copy of the *Ashtavakra Samhita* was in his room. When the Master found anyone reading that book, he would forbid him and would give him instead such books as 'Mukti and how to attain it', the *Bhagavad Gita* or some Purana. But, scarcely had I gone to him when he took out the book and asked me to read it. Or, he would ask me to read some part of the *Adhyatma Ramayana,* which is full of non-dualistic ideas. I said, and sometimes bluntly, 'What is the use of reading this book? It is a sin even to think 'I am God'. The book teaches the same blasphemy. It should be burnt.' The Master smiled and said, 'Do I ask you to read it to yourself? I ask you to read a little to me. Please do it. In that case, you will not have to think that you are God.' So I had to read a little for him at his request."

Again, although he was training the Swami that way, the Master was guiding Swami Brahmananda and his other boy devotees, in their spiritual lives in various other ways—some through the worship of God with forms, some through that of God with attributes but without forms, others through pure unalloyed devotion, yet others through devotion mingled with discrimination between the real and the unreal, and so on. Thus although Swami Vivekananda and other boy devotees sat and slept, ate and walked together, and discussed religious theories in the company of the Master at

Dakshineswar, the latter was training them all in diverse ways according to their peculiar tastes and tendencies.

It was March 1886. The Master at the Kasipur garden was daily becoming weaker on account of a disease in his throat. But he engaged himself with a far greater and much more unstinting enthusiasm than before in moulding the spiritual lives of his devotees, particularly the life of Swami Vivekananda. He did not stop merely with teaching the Swami the path of Sadhana and helping him to carry the teaching into practice, but was also training him up in something else, namely how to prevent the other boy devotees from returning to worldly life and how to guide them and hold them together. Every evening after dusk he would ask all others to move away, call the Swami to himself and teach him all these for two or three hours continuously, sometimes drawing him into a discussion. From the words and actions of the Master, it seemed to most of the devotees that he was feigning the throat disease in order to establish his Order firmly and that he would be all right as soon as that purpose was fulfilled. As days rolled on Swami Vivekananda alone felt in his heart of hearts that the Master was arranging everything and preparing, as it were, to take a long, long leave of the devotees. It is doubtful, however, whether even he was always conscious of it.

Then there was a slight awakening in the Swami of the power of transmitting spirituality to others by a touch. No doubt, he had felt that power arise within him from time to time, but he had not yet tested the truth or falsity of it by touching anyone that way. Still in various ways he got the proofs of the truth of the doctrine of non-duality spoken of in the Vedanta and came to believe in it, and tried to introduce that doctrine among the devotees, young or old, married or unmarried, with the help of reason and inference. There arose then a keen controversy over it; leading to sharp differences of opinion, nay, agitation, among the devotees. For, it was the peculiar nature of the Swami to assert vehemently what he understood to be true and to extort its acceptance from others by means of logical arguments. Then the boy Swami did not realize that truth in the practical world assumed different forms according to different conditions and capabilities. It was the Sivaratri in the month of Phalgun. Three or four of the boy devotees were keeping the fast with the Swami. They had a mind to spend

the night in worship and in keeping vigil. Lest the noise should disturb the Master's rest, the worship was arranged in a small room built for the kitchen, situated a little away to the east of the residential quarters. There was a fair shower of rain after dusk. The devotees were delighted to see in the masses of newly formed clouds flashes of lightning ever and anon, simulating the matted hair of Siva.

After finishing the worship, Japa and meditation pertaining to the first quarter of the night, the Swami was taking rest and conversing with others, sitting on the worshipper's seat. One of the companions went out to prepare a smoke for him and another went towards the residential quarters on an important work. Just at that time, a keen feeling of that divine power arose suddenly in the Swami. He wanted to observe its effects by putting it to test that night and said to Swami A,[1] who was sitting in front of him, "Do touch me for a while". In the meantime the boy who had gone to prepare tobacco entered the room and saw the Swami sitting motionless in meditation, and A with his eyes shut, touching the Swami's right knee with his right hand, which, he noticed, was rapidly trembling. A minute or two elapsed thus when the Swami opened his eyes and said, "That is enough. How did you feel?"

A. "Exactly like something entering into one when one holds an electric battery, one's hand trembling all the while."

The other person asked A, "Was your hand trembling of itself when you touched the Swami?"

A. "Yes, I could not keep it steady, though I tried to."

There was then no more talk about it. The Swami smoked. All of them then applied their minds to the worship and meditation pertaining to the second quarter of the night. A entered into deep meditation at that time. We had never seen him enter into such deep meditation before. The whole of his body became stiff, with his neck and head slightly bent, the consciousness of the outer world appeared to have completely disappeared for some time. Everyone present thought that he had such meditation as a result of having touched the Swami a little while previously. The Swami also noticed that state of his, and indicated it to a companion by a sign.

After the last quarter's worship was over at four in the morning, Swami Ramakrishnananda came to the worship-room and said to the Swami, "The Master wants you." As soon as he was told, the Swami went up to the Master in his room on the first floor of the residential quarters. Ramakrishnananda also accompanied him to attend to the service of the Master.

No sooner had the Master seen the Swami than he said, "What is this? Expenditure with hardly any accumulation! Allow it first to accumulate well in yourself; then you will know where and how to spend it. Mother Herself will teach. Don't you see what harm you have done to him by injecting your attitude of mind into him? He has been progressing till now with a particular mental attitude, the whole of which has now been destroyed, like a miscarriage during the sixth month of pregnancy. What's done is done. Don't act so thoughtlessly from now on. The boy, however, is lucky that greater harm has not befallen him." The Swami said afterwards, "I became completely flabbergasted. The Master could know whatever we did at the time of the worship! What else could I do but remain silent when he scolded me like that?"

As a result of this, not only was the old spiritual attitude of A completely destroyed but the new attitude of non-dualism, being difficult to grasp and assimilate quickly was also misunderstood; and in the name of non-dualism he would behave like an atheist, sometimes committing improper act or acts contrary to scriptural injunctions. Although the Master from then taught him the truth of non-duality and affectionately pointed out the mistakes he was committing in the day-to-day acts of his life, it was long after the passing away of the Master that A guided by that attitude, could rightly adjust his daily actions to that ideal.

6. When sporting like a man, the Divine behaves like a man

To the class of devotees who think that the efforts of the incarnations of God for the attainment of truth or the fullest manifestation thereof in life are mere simulation, our answer is that we never heard the Master express that view. Rather, we have heard him say often, "When the Divine sports as a human being, He behaves exactly like an ordinary man and experiences

weal and woe and attains perfection by dint of personal effort, endeavour and austerity." The history of the religions of the world bears witness to this. And it is clear that were it not so, the very purpose of the incarnation of the Divinity would be defeated.

The Master's teachings to the devotees can be broadly divided into two classes. The reader will realize it when we quote a few of these. On the one hand we find him saying to his devotees, "I have cooked food, simply sit down to partake of it"; "The mould is prepared, cast your own minds and get the form"; "If you cannot do anything at all, give me your power of attorney", so on and so forth; and on the other hand, "Give up all desires one by one, it is then that you will succeed"; "Be like a cast-off leaf blown by the wind"; "Give up lust and lucre and call on God"; "I have done all the sixteen parts. Do at least one part yourselves" and so on. It seems that our progress in life is retarded, because we very often fail to understand the significance of the Master's teachings and thus to choose between free will and pre-destination, self-effort and self-surrender.

One day at Dakshineswar we had a long discussion with one of our friends[1] on free will and pre-destination and went to the Master for its true solution. The Master amused himself with our boyish discussion for some time and then said seriously, "Is there any one who has free will or anything like that? It is by God's will alone that everything has always happened and shall happen. Man understands it in the long run. But then something has to be added. Just as, when a cow is tied to a post with a long tether, it can stand at a distance of one cubit from it or of the whole length of the rope, so it is with the free will of man. A man ties a cow with the idea 'Let her lie down, stand or move about wherever she wills within that area'. Similarly God has given man some power. And He has also given him freedom to use as much of it as he likes and in any way. This is why man feels he is free. But the rope is fastened to the post. And mark this: If anyone prays to Him in all humility, He may remove him to another place and tie him there; or He may lengthen the tether or even remove it completely from his neck."

Thus instructed, we asked, "Then man has no hand in practising religious discipline. Everyone may say, 'Whatever I do, is according to His will'."

The Master said: "Of what avail is it to say so? They are empty words. What avails it to say, 'There is no thorn, no pricking'? As soon as you touch

a thorn you cry out ‘Ugh’. If the practising of Sadhana were in the hands of man, all would have undertaken it. But how is it that they can’t? There is, however, one thing: He does not give one more power, if the little that is given is not properly used. This is why individual effort and perseverance are necessary. Don’t you see, everyone has to make some effort, however small, before he gets God’s grace? When one does so, the experiences of ten lives are crowded, through His grace, into one and then all come to an end. But one has to make some effort. Listen to a story:

7. The conversation between Vishnu and Narada on this topic

Vishnu, who eternally sports in Goloka, for some reason cursed Narada that he must go to hell. Narada’s anxiety knew no bounds. He sang hymns in His praise and pleased Him. Then he said, ‘O Lord, I wish to know what and where hell is and how many kinds of hell there are. Please be gracious to tell me all about it.’ Vishnu then drew on the ground with a piece of chalk, heaven, earth and hell as they were situated, and said, ‘This is heaven and this is hell’. Narada said, ‘Is that so? My suffering in hell is then done here’. Saying so, he rolled on the hell drawn on the ground, got up and bowed down to the Lord. Vishnu smiled and said, ‘What’s that? Can that be suffering hell?’ Narada replied, ‘Why not, Lord; are not heaven and hell your creations? When you drew hell and called it such, the spot really became hell. And when I rolled on it, it was a real suffering of hell for me’. Narada said so with deep faith. That is why Vishnu said, ‘Be it so’. But Narada had to roll on that hell drawn on the ground with true devotion and faith. It was by making that little effort that his suffering was annulled.” The Master explained to us from time to time with the help of this story, that there was thus room for perseverance and individual effort in the realm of grace too.

8. Incarnations of God assume imperfection of man to discover paths to liberation

The incarnations of God have to experience to a great extent, the spiritual blindness and circumscribed knowledge experienced by us, when they

assume human bodies and play their parts as human beings. They have to make efforts like us to discover the way out of spiritual darkness and ignorance. And although an awareness of their real divine nature now and then arises in their minds for a short time, it becomes veiled again till that path is discovered. Thus, for the good of the many they have to assume a veil of Maya and grope their way like us all in this realm of light and darkness. But as they have not even an iota of hankering for selfish enjoyment in their minds, they see more light in life than we do, and easily concentrating all the numerous powers within them, solve life's problems in a short time and engage themselves in doing good to humanity.

9. If incarnations are not thought of as human beings, we cannot get at the purpose of their lives and endeavours

Inasmuch as our Master, the god-man, has actually accepted human imperfections, much good will accrue to us from the study of those human feelings of his. And that is why we advise our readers to study his divine nature keeping before their eyes his human feelings. If we do not take him as one of us, we shall not be able to discover any purpose behind his superhuman effort, perseverance, etc., at the time of his Sadhana. Otherwise, the question will naturally arise, why there had to be such effort to realize the truth, when he was eternally perfect. And we cannot escape the idea that his terrible effort threatening his very life was but a sham. That is not all. His effort, steadfastness, and renunciation for the purpose of firmly implanting the high ideals in his life, with a view to realizing God, will give rise to despair rather than hope in our hearts, making the dispelling of ignorance from our lives an impossibility.

10. Unenlightened souls can understand an incarnation of God only as a human being

Dependent as we are on the Master's grace, we must accept him as being endowed with human feelings like ourselves. For is it not his sympathy with our sorrows that leads him to come forward to remove them? Therefore, from whatever angle we see, we have no other course than to think of him

as having human feelings. In fact, until we ourselves are free from all kinds of bondage and are established in the nature of the attributeless Brahman, we shall have to think of and accept God, the universal cause, and His incarnations as being endowed with human feelings. The saying "Becoming God, one should worship Him", is indeed true. If you have reached the Nirvikalpa plane of consciousness by virtue of Samadhi, then alone will you be able to realize the real nature of God, have a correct conception of Him and truly worship Him. But if you have not been able to do so, your worship will be but an attempt at ascending to that divine plane and making yourselves fit for the true worship of God. Till then, you will continue to consider God, the cause of the universe, to be a human being endowed with extraordinary powers.

11. God takes on a human body out of compassion for humanity. Therefore it is beneficial to study the lives of divine incarnations as human beings

Persons who can ascend to the state of Godhead and can truly worship Him as the divine Being, are very few. Weak aspirants like ourselves have been till now very far from that state. Thus, having compassion on ordinary mortals like ourselves, and desiring to accept our heartfelt worship, God descends to the plane of human beings, putting on the appearance of a god-man by assuming a human body and human feelings. We are in an advantageous position to study the history of the Master's spiritual striving in comparison with that of the god-men of the past, for the Master himself delineated in detail from time to time the facts of the Sadhana period of his life in such glowing colours that they have remained firmly imprinted on our minds. Again, the wonderful play of his life as an aspirant had been acted before all the people of the Kali temple just before we went to him. And many of those people were still there. So we had also the opportunity of hearing from them some of those events. That apart, before we begin to study the history of these events, it is good to rehearse once in a general way the fundamental principles of Sadhana. So we shall add a brief discussion on it.

Footnote

1. Abhedananda.

1. Swami Niranjanananda.

CHAPTER I
SADHAKA AND SADHANA[1]
(THE SPIRITUAL ASPIRANT AND SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE)

To become truly acquainted with the Sadhaka-state of the Master's life, we must, first of all, know what Sadhana is. An objection may be raised: why do you increase the bulk of the book by raising this topic, when India has all along been engaged in it in some form or other? Which other nation of the world has applied and is still applying its powers to realize directly the truths of the spiritual realm as this country has done since the very dawn of time? In which other country have so many incarnations of God and knowers of Brahman been born? Therefore, it is superfluous to recount the fundamental principles of spiritual discipline to us, who are already acquainted with them.

1. The erroneous conception of ordinary people about Sadhana

Although what has been said is true, a real need will be served by the recounting, for people generally have fantastic ideas about Sadhana in many places. Having lost sight of the goal, they think they come across Sadhana when they meet with the practice of extraordinary physical hardship, the bringing together of rare objects, strange actions in out-of-the-way places, holding the breath, nay, even the fantastic doings of deranged minds. Again, they regard as Sadhana those peculiar practices which were originally prescribed by some great souls for bringing to normality certain minds obsessed with evil impressions and habits, quite as much as those which are now being preached, holding good for all minds and practised as such. There are still others, who, lacking in dispassion and wistfully craving for

the enjoyment of the fleeting objects of senses such as beautiful forms and delicious dishes, spend their lives in vain efforts under a delusion that the Lord, the cause of the universe, could be constrained by means of certain Mantras and practices, as snakes are. Therefore, it will not be out of place here to make a brief survey of the truths about Sadhana, discovered by the effort and perseverance of the sages and seers of India through millennia.

2. The ultimate result of Sadhana is the realization of Brahman in all beings

The Master used to say: "Seeing Brahman or God in all beings is the last word of Sadhana." It falls to the lot of man as the ultimate development of spiritual discipline. Thus say the Vedas and the Upanishads, the most authoritative scriptures of the Hindus. Whatever you see in the world, gross or subtle, sentient or insentient—bricks and beams, mud and stone, plants and trees, men and animals, gods and demigods—are, they say, the non-dual Brahman. It is the reality of Brahman alone that you see, hear, touch, smell and taste in various forms. Although all your day-to-day dealings throughout your life are with It, you are not conscious of It, and you think you are dealing with different things and persons. This will probably be easily understood by the reader if we describe here, by way of questions and answers, the gist of the doubts that arise in our minds on hearing the above statement and of the refutations thereof by the scriptures.

Question: Why is this fact[1] not directly felt by us?

Answer: You are in a delusion. How can you detect it till it is removed? It is by comparison with real things and states only that we detect external and internal delusions. Similarly, you must have that kind of knowledge if you want to detect that delusion.

Question: Well, what is the cause of that delusion? And when did it arise in us?

3. Truth does not become immediately known on account of delusion and ignorance; as long as one is in delusion, one cannot know its cause

Answer: The cause of delusion here is the same as it is everywhere. It is ignorance. How can you know when that ignorance arose? As long as you are in ignorance, your efforts to know it are in vain. As long as one dreams a dream, one remains convinced that it is real. When sleep breaks, the dream is compared with the waking state and is known as unreal. You may raise the objection that certain persons have sometimes the conviction that they are dreaming when they are actually in the dream state. But, there also they get that conviction from the memory of the waking state. Similarly some people are seen to have the memory of the reality of the non-dual Brahman when they are conscious of the world in the waking state.

Question: Then what is the way out?

Answer: The way out is to remove that ignorance. I can tell you with certainty that ignorance and delusion can be removed. The ancient seers were able to remove them, and have left us instructions about the method.

Question: Very well. But before we proceed to know those means, we want to put one or two more questions. You assert that to be unreal, which we and so many others see and feel to be real; and you call that alone to be real which a few sages have seen and experienced. May it not be that their immediate perception was wrong?

4. What the seers saw the world to be, is alone true. —The reason for it

Answer: There is no such rule that what many believe is alone true. I say that the direct knowledge of the seers is true, because, they attained freedom from fear in all respects and enjoyed eternal peace, freed from all kinds of misery, with the help of that knowledge. Moreover, they became aware of a great purpose underlying all the efforts and endeavours of human life ending in inevitable death. Besides, right knowledge always unfolds in the human mind forbearance, contentment, compassion, humility and other noble qualities and endows it with a wonderful magnanimity. We know from the scriptures that the seers possessed those uncommon qualities and powers and we still come across them in people who, following in their footsteps, have achieved perfection.

5. Delusion, although shared by many, is not right knowledge

Question: Well, how is it that all of us have the same delusion? What I identify as a beast is also known by you as a beast and not as a man; and so it is with everything else. It is a matter of no little surprise that at the same time so many people are in the same delusion about all matters. It is everywhere seen that if a few people have a wrong knowledge of a certain thing, others have the right one. But here that truth does not hold good at all. Therefore, what you say does not seem to be probable.

6. All have the same delusion, as the universe is an ideation of the cosmic mind which, however, is not itself deluded

Answer: You find here an exception to the rule, because you do not count the few seers among the people. Otherwise the reply is there in the question itself. But, in reply to your question, how all people are under the same delusion, the scriptures say: in the limitless infinite cosmic mind the universe has arisen by way of ideation. And as the individual minds of yours, of mine and of all people form parts of, and are comprised in, that cosmic mind, we all have to experience the same ideas. This is why we cannot, by our individual efforts, ideate a beast as anything else. It is for the same reason that although one of us attains right knowledge and becomes free from that delusion, all others continue in it as before. One thing more: although the idea, the universe, arises in the all-pervading mind of the omnipresent Person, He does not get entangled like us in the bondage of ignorance. For He, the all-knowing Person, sees the non-dual reality of Brahman interpenetrating the ideation, both in and out of the universe born of ignorance. It is because we cannot do it that our case is different. For, as the Master would say, “A snake has poison in its mouth. It takes its food daily through it, still it remains unaffected by the poison. But anyone whom it bites, meets with instantaneous death.

7. The ideation of the universe is beyond time and space. Prakriti is beginningless

Therefore, from the standpoint of the scriptures it is seen that the universe, which is an idea in the universal mind, is, in a way, an ideation of

our minds also. For our limited individual minds have an eternal, inseparable relation with the aggregate universal mind, like that between the limbs and the body. Again, it cannot be said that there was a time when the aforesaid ideation was not in existence in the universal mind and that it came into existence afterwards. For, the two things, name and form, or space and time,[1] without which there could be no diversity, are included in the idea of the universe; or in other words, they have an eternal and inseparable coherence with the said idea. By a little calm thinking the reader will be able to understand it and know why the Vedas and other scriptures teach that Prakriti or Maya, the ultimate material of creation, is beginningless and beyond time.[2] If the universe is an idea of the mind and if the beginning of that idea is not within what we understand by "time", it comes to this that simultaneously with the idea called "time", the idea called "the universe" exists in the universal mind, the support of that idea. As our limited individual minds have been experiencing that idea for an infinitely long time, they have a firm belief in the real existence of the universe. And having been debarred from the immediate knowledge of the reality of the non-dual Brahman for a long time, they do not know that the universe is a mere idea and are now unable to detect their error. For, we have already said that it is by a comparison with real things and states only that we can detect external and internal errors.

8. The effort to know the universal cause beyond time and space is Sadhana

Now it is clear that our conception, experience, etc., of the universe have assumed their present forms as the result of our habits accumulated over an almost infinitely long time. So, if we want to have the right knowledge of the universe, we shall have to be acquainted with the entity beyond name and form, time and space, mind and intellect and all other things comprised in the universe. The effort to have that acquaintance has been described as Sadhana by the Vedas and other scriptures; and in India men and women, in whom that effort exists, with or without their knowledge, are called Sadhakas.

9. The two paths of Sadhana:(1) not this, not this, and (2) this, this

Generally speaking, the aforesaid effort in search of the reality beyond the universe, has taken its course along two main channels: One is what has been called in the Sastras —Neti, Neti, not this, not this,[1] or the path of knowledge; and the other—Iti, Iti, this, this, or the path of devotion. The aspirant following the path of knowledge has from the beginning a conception of the ultimate ideal; and always remembering it, goes forward consciously towards that ideal. The traveller on the path of devotion remains very often ignorant of where he will go ultimately. He accepts higher and higher ideals one after another as he goes forward and at last becomes directly acquainted with the non-dual reality beyond the universe. This is the only point of difference between the two; for, the travellers on both the paths have to renounce the conception about the universe held by the common man. The man on the path of knowledge tries to renounce it in all respects from the beginning; and although the devotee proceeds by partly renouncing and partly retaining it, he too at long last renounces it wholly and arrives at the truth, “One without a second”. The renunciation of that common conception of the universe, coloured by our selfishness, which has made enjoyment the only goal of life, has been called by the scriptures, detachment or dispassion (Vairagya).

As human life is ever changing and ends in sure death the knowledge of the transitoriness of the world arises easily in it. Therefore it is probable that, in the past, the search for the ultimate cause of the universe at first took the path of “not this”, “not this”, together with the complete renunciation of the common conception of the universe. And that is why the complete development of the path of knowledge is seen to have taken place in the Upanishads before the path of devotion became complete in all respects, though both were simultaneously in vogue.

10. The goal of the path of “not this, not this,” is to know “What am I”

The Upanishads bear witness to the fact that man advanced along the path of “not this”, “not this”, (*i.e.*, the eternal cause of the universe is not this, not that, nor anything else) and became introspective in a short time.

He found that of all the things of the world, his body and mind were the first to connect him with it; hence it was probable that he would get the knowledge of the cause of the universe sooner if he proceeded to search for it through his body and mind than through anything else. Again, "just as by pressing with fingers one grain of rice in the cooking pot one can know whether all the grains in the pot have been well boiled or not", so, as soon as one knows in oneself the eternal universal cause, one is able to know it in other things and persons also. That is why the knowledge of "What am I?" becomes the only aim of the aspirant on the path of knowledge.

11. Nirvikalpa Samadhi

We have said before that the notion about the universe held by the generality of people has to be renounced both by men on the path of knowledge and by those on that of devotion. By the complete renunciation of it man becomes free from all mental modifications and is thereby fit for Samadhi. This kind of Samadhi is called in the scriptures Nirvikalpa Samadhi. We have told the reader elsewhere[1] how the aspirant on the path of knowledge makes the effort to know "What am I?", how he attains the Nirvikalpa Samadhi and what kind of experience he has at that time. Now, the reader should be told a little of how the aspirant on the path of devotion arrives at the realization of that superconscious state.

We have designated the path of devotion as the path of "this", "this". For, although the traveller on this path has the actual knowledge of the transience of the world, he believes in God, its creator, and has the conviction of the reality and existence of the world created by Him. The devotee looks upon the world and all things and persons in it as related with God and makes them His own. He shuns whatever he believes to be an obstacle on the path leading to the realization of that relation. It becomes the devotee's immediate ideal to become absorbed in Him through the love of and meditation on one or other of His forms[2] and also to perform all actions out of love for Him.

12. How Nirvikalpa Samadhi is attained on the path of "this, this"

We shall now discuss how one can, forgetting the existence of the universe, reach the Nirvikalpa state of consciousness by being absorbed in the meditation on forms of God. We have said before that the devotee accepts as his chosen Ideal some particular form of God and continues to think of and meditate on that form. He cannot in the beginning bring before his mind's eye, at the time of meditation, the complete picture of the person of his chosen Ideal. Sometimes the hands of that mental picture, sometimes the feet and sometimes only the face appear before him. These again, dissolve, as it were, as soon as they are seen; they do not continue to stand before him. As a result of practice, when meditation becomes deep, the complete picture of that form appears before his mind's eye. When meditation gradually becomes deeper, the picture continues to stand motionless before him till the mind begins to stir. Afterwards, according to the greater intensity of meditation, the devotee becomes conscious of the movement, the smile, the speech, and ultimately the touch of that living form. Then the devotee sees, with his eyes open or shut, the benign presence of that form and its graceful movements wherever he wills. The devout aspirant gradually comes to have the visions of various divine forms springing from his own chosen Ideal, as the result of his faith that "his chosen Ideal has, out of his own accord, assumed all forms". The Master used to say, "A person who has the vision of one such form in that living fashion, gets easily the vision of all other forms."

One thing is clear from what has been said before. One who has the good fortune to have the vision of such living forms feels that those forms in the realm of ideas experienced during meditation, have as real an existence as those of the things and persons of the waking state. Thus, as the feeling deepens that these experiences of the world of ideas are as real as those of the external world, the conviction that the latter also are a projection of the mind is intensified. Again, during deep meditation, the experiences of the realm of ideas become so powerful in the mind of the devotee that he does not have the slightest knowledge of the external world for the time being. This condition of the devotee has been designated by the scriptures Savikalpa Samadhi. Although, owing to the strength of his mental power, the external world vanishes from the mind of the devotee at the time of such Samadhi, the realm of ideas still persists. The devotee becomes conscious of

exactly the same misery and happiness in moving with his chosen Ideal during his meditation as we feel daily in moving amidst the things and persons in the external world. All his ideas, without any exception, that arise at that time in his mind have only his chosen Ideal for their object. The scriptures have called that condition of the devotee's mind Savikalpa Samadhi, because at that time the series of the mental modifications of the devotee have only one thing for their main object.

Thus the gross external world vanishes from the mind of the devotee owing to the meditation on a particular object of the realm of the ideal world, and when one idea becomes dominant, all other ideas disappear. The attainment of the Nirvikalpa Samadhi is not very remote from this devout aspirant who has been able to advance so far. Thus, the mind of the person, getting rid of the belief in the existence of the external world to which he has been accustomed for an infinitely long time, becomes endowed with much power and determination. The whole of his mind goes forward with enthusiasm in the direction of the enjoyment of divine bliss when once there arises the conviction that the enjoyment of that bliss becomes more intense if the mind can be made completely free from modifications. He then ascends to the highest plane in the realm of ideas by the grace of the teacher and God, and establishes himself firmly in non-dual knowledge and attains eternal peace. Or, it may be said that the very intense love for his chosen Ideal shows him that plane and, urged by it, he realizes his identity with that Ideal, like the Gopis of Vraja.

13. Incarnations of God combine in them both the aspects, the divine and the human. So they sometimes appear as perfect even during Sadhana. Hence the need of studying their lives from both the points of view

These are the ways laid down by the scriptures for persons treading the paths of knowledge and of devotion to arrive at their ultimate goal. But, as the two natures, the divine and the human, are found in the incarnations of God all their lives, sometimes they are seen even during their Sadhana period to the endowed with the knowledge and power proper to perfected persons. This happens because they naturally have the power of roaming on both the planes, the divine and the human. Or, because their divine nature is

inborn and spontaneous, sometimes it pierces the external veil of their human nature and manifests itself from time to time. Whatever may be our conclusion, these facts have made the lives of the incarnations of God impenetrably mysterious to the human intellect. It does not seem to be probable that this intricate mystery will ever be solved completely. But it is very certain that endless good accrues to man when he studies these lives with reverence. In the past Pauranic age the human nature of the incarnations of God was kept hidden and the divine one alone discussed. In this sceptical modern age, the divine nature of those characters is being completely disregarded while the human one is being studied. In the present instance, we shall make an effort to explain to the reader, by a discussion of those characters, that both the natures co-exist in them. It is needless to add here that we would not have been able to look upon the character of the incarnations of God in that way, if we had not had the privilege of meeting the Master.

Footnote

1. The meanings of these two words will be made clear in II. 1. 8.—Tr.

1. viz., that we are dealing with the one all-pervading Brahman and not with individual things and persons.—Tr.

1. Form—“curvature in time-space continuum.”—Tr.

2. Prakrti, being the cause of time and space, is beyond them.—Tr.

1. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* 2.3.6 and in fact, all the Upanishads advocate it. The rest of the Hindu scriptures, based on the "work" portion of the Vedas, emphasize the path of "this", "this".—Tr.

1. III.3.

2. We look upon the worship of the Brahmo Samaj as a meditation on a form of God; for when anyone meditates on a personality possessed of noble qualities but not form, he is bound to think of one or other of such things as ether, water, air, fire, etc.

CHAPTER II
THE ATTITUDE OF A SADHAKA IN THE LIFE OF AN INCARNATION OF GOD

1. The co-existence of the divine and human aspects in the Master

Blessed by the opportunity of being in the holy company of the divine Master, we have been charmed to notice the wonderful co-existence of both the aspects of divinity and humanity in him. The more we have contemplated his life and character, the more have we been convinced of this fact. If we had not seen him, we could never have had the conception that such contrary ideas could exist in such sweet congruence and harmony in the same person. It is because we observed it in him that this conviction has grown in us that he was God and man in one, that he was exactly what the infinite being of God and His power are when manifested behind the veil of a human body and human feelings. It is because we saw it that we have come to understand that he feigned neither aspect, but actually assumed human nature for the good of humanity and showed us the path leading to divinity. Again, it is because we saw it that we have become convinced that there were certainly such wonderful manifestations of both these aspects in the lives of the incarnations of past ages also.

2. The same is the case with all incarnations

We shall meet with the same truth if we study with reverence the life of any one of the incarnations of God. We shall find that, impelled by a wonderful unknown power, they are sometimes in the same plane of consciousness as other human beings are and behave like ourselves with all

the objects and persons of the world; but, at other times, ascending to higher planes, bring to us information about the unknown. Although they do not long for it, someone adjusts and arranges everything and makes them act that way. And it is so from their childhood. But getting, as they do get sometimes, an indication of that power in them in their childhood, they cannot detect and understand that it is their own, and lies deep within them. Also they cannot apply that power at will in order to ascend to higher spiritual planes and see all things and persons of the world in the light of the divine consciousness and behave with them accordingly. But as they go on getting more frequent experiences of that power in their lives day after day, a strong desire to be fully acquainted with it arises in their minds. It is this desire that endows them with a unique ardour and enthusiasm and induces them to undertake spiritual discipline.

3. Incarnations of God have no desire for selfish enjoyment

However, there does not exist the slightest tinge of selfishness in that desire of the incarnations of God. Not to speak of their not having any yearning for the enjoyment of the petty pleasures of the senses here or hereafter, even the idea that they themselves might become liberated and enjoy the infinite bliss, irrespective of others' fate, does not exist in them, the only thing that is observed to exist at the root of that desire is the inquiry whether that unknown, extraordinary power really exists in the background of the universe or it is a mere fabrication of their own imagination—that power, under whose guidance and direction they experience from their birth unique ideas, unintelligible to man, and sometimes feel that everything in the realm of ideas has an existence as real as that of the things and persons known in the gross world. For, by comparing their knowledge and experiences with those of others, they become convinced in a very short time that the latter do not have the same knowledge about the nature of the things and persons of the world as they themselves have all their lives, and that others lack almost completely the power to see the world from a higher plane of consciousness.

4. Their compassion: they undertake Sadhana for the welfare of others

That is not all. They become convinced simultaneously of another fact through that comparison. They can understand that because they see the world in two different forms from the two planes of consciousness, the ideal and the real, objects of senses like sight, taste which are pleasant for the time being, cannot allure them as they do human beings in general, and the dense shadows of despondency and peacelessness that arise from the reverses of fortune cannot cloud their intellect. Therefore, their compassionate minds become completely absorbed in the struggle to gain complete control over that power. Thereby they ascend to higher and higher planes of consciousness and remain there as long as they like, in order to teach the people of all classes and conditions, from the highest to the lowest, to do so themselves and become endowed with peace. So, two mighty streams, of sadhana and compassion, are always seen to flow side by side in their lives. Although that compassion may increase a hundred-fold on account of the vast difference between their own condition and that of human beings in general, it may be said that the source of their unique compassion has not been identified. It has to be said that it is inborn. Nothing further can be added. Let us quote an illustration cited by the Master:

5. An illustration of it: the Master's story of three friends having the vision of the 'grove of bliss'

"Three friends went for a walk in a field. They went to the middle of the field and saw an area enclosed by a high wall. Sweet sounds of music, both vocal and instrumental, were coming out of it. Attracted by the music, they wished to know what was going on within. They went round the wall and found that there was not a single entrance to it. What could they do? One of them somehow procured a ladder and climbed up the wall, while the other two stood below. The first man got up on the wall and was beside himself with joy on seeing what was happening within. He laughed loudly and jumped within. He could not at all wait to tell the other two standing below what he saw within. They thought, 'Ah, our friend is a fine man! He did not even tell us once what he saw! However that may be, we have to see what there is inside.' Then one of them climbed up that ladder. The moment he

got to the top, he also, like the first, burst out laughing and jumped within. What was the third man to do then? He climbed up that ladder and saw the fair of bliss within. When he saw it, his first thought was to join it. But immediately afterwards he thought, 'If I now join it, the public outside cannot know that there is a place here for the enjoyment of such bliss. Shall I enjoy it alone?' Thinking so, he forced his mind to turn back and came down. Then he began to proclaim to one and all, to whomsoever he happened to see, 'Listen, there is a place of bliss here. Come, let us enjoy it together.' He thus took all the people with him and joined in the enjoyment. You see now, just as we cannot find out the cause of the third friend's inclination to share the enjoyment with many, so also we cannot point out why the desire to do good to humanity is present in the incarnations from their very childhood."

6. The incarnations of God have to practise self-control like ordinary men

From what has been said, some perhaps may come to the conclusion that the incarnations of God have never to fight like ourselves with the unruly senses, that perhaps they remain under their control throughout their lives and that they follow them like meek children, and thus they can easily make their minds turn from worldly sights, tastes, etc., and direct them to high ideals. We say in reply that it is not so. In this respect also they act in their human play like men. Here also they have to come out victorious from the fight and then proceed on their paths.

7. Innumerable desires of the mind

Anyone who has tried to know even a little of the nature of the human mind has seen that, beginning from the gross, there exist in it infinite strata of desires—subtle, subtler, and still subtler. If you are somehow able to go beyond one, another comes and obstructs your path; and when you conquer the latter, still another takes its place. When you have left the gross ones behind, the subtle ones come and oppose you. If you give up lust of woman, that of gold arises; if you refrain from indulging in both in a gross way,

attachment to outward beauty, desire for name and fame, and the like come to you! Or, if you carefully renounce all worldly attachments, they come and occupy your heart in the guise of idleness or compassion.

8. The Master urged us to give up desires

The Master spoke of this dangerous nature of the mind and always warned us to shun the net of desires. In order to carry conviction to us he would sometimes cite examples from his own life of how he thought and acted under similar circumstances. And he narrated them repeatedly to all the women devotees as he did to the men and kindled the love of God in their hearts. The following incident will make this clear:

Whoever, men or women, went to the Master, they felt in their heart of hearts attracted by his amiability, courtesy and his extraordinary love free from the slightest tinge of lust, and became anxious to have the blessing of meeting him once more whenever there was any opportunity. Not only did they themselves visit him again and again, but they also took with them all their acquaintances, so that they too might enjoy pure bliss in his company. One afternoon, one of our acquaintances went to the Master at Dakshineswar with her step-sister and a sister of the latter's husband. They saluted him and took their seats. The Master then inquired about their welfare and started a conversation, leading to the thought that the only aim of human life should be to have a loving devotion to God. "Can one", continued he, "easily take refuge in the divine Lord? Inscrutable are the ways of Mahamaya! Does She allow this to happen? She makes one who has no relative in the world rear up a cat and live a worldly life. One then goes round to procure milk for the cat and says, 'What can I do? The cat does not take anything but fish and milk.'

9. Instruction to women devotees about it

"Perhaps one comes of a rich and noble family. The husband and children have all died. Those who are left behind are so many widows, lingering as if there is to be no death for them. Some parts of the house are falling to pieces, others have already given way. On the roof trees have grown and

along with them a few plants of spinage. The widows gather them, make a curry and go on with their worldly life! But why? Why do they not take refuge in the divine Lord? Theirs is indeed the time for that. But that is not to be!

"Again, perhaps one loses one's husband soon after one's marriage and becomes a child-widow. She is now a childless grown-up widow. Why does she not call on God? But that she will not do. She becomes the guardian of her brother's household. With her hair fastened in a knot over the crown of her head and a bunch of keys tied at the end of her cloth, she wags her finger at every one and exercises her authority over all. The whole village is afraid of her, the terror of all. And she goes about saying, 'My brother cannot have even a meal if I am not there.' Ah, that wretch of a woman! Why does she not look at what has happened to her—what, after all, has she gained for herself!"

Well, there was a peculiar coincidence here. The third lady of the party, who was meeting the Master that day for the first time, was one of this type of women-guardians to their brother's household. Nobody had told the Master of it before. But in the course of conversation the Master referred to that example and began to explain the powerful influence of desires and the existence of endless strata of desires in human minds. Needless to say, these words entered into the very heart of that lady. Hearing of the examples, the sister of the lady of our acquaintance nudged her and whispered, "Sister, just fancy, that such words should come out of the Master's lips today of all days! How will my sister-in-law take these words?" To this our acquaintance replied, "What can we do about it? It is his pleasure. Nobody tutored him."

10. The struggle of incarnations with their subtle desires

It becomes very clear from a study of human nature that the higher a man's mind ascends, the more intensely do the subtle desires pain him. One, who has committed thefts, uttered falsehoods or indulged in licentiousness innumerable times, is not much pained by repeating those actions; but an honest and high-minded man considers himself guilty and becomes distressed even at the thought of such things. Although incarnations of God

are often seen to refrain from gross worldly enjoyments all their lives, they fight with the subtle desires of their minds to the same extent as we do and feel the pain a hundred times keener than we, when they see those desires take shape within their minds—a fact which they themselves clearly admit. How can we, therefore, regard their struggles to withdraw their senses from sights, tastes, and other objects of the senses as feigned?

11. An objection regarding human feelings in incarnations, and its refutation

Perhaps, even now some reader acquainted with the scriptures may say: "But how can I accept what you say? Don't you see what Sankara, the paragon of monists, says in the beginning of his commentary on the *Gita* regarding the birth and the assumption of a human body on the part of Sri Krishna? He says there, 'God the eternally free, eternally awake and eternally pure in nature, the controller of all living beings, devoid of birth etc., is born as it were, is possessed of a body as it were, through Maya, His own power, in order to do good to humanity.' When Sankara himself says so, how does your statement hold good?" Without contradicting Sankara we say that we still have reason to take our stand on. In order to understand him, we must remember a thing. Just as he regards God's possession of name and form as apparent, so does he, consider our possession of them equally false. He regards the whole universe as a false superimposition on the reality of Brahman, and does not admit its real existence.[1] Therefore, his conclusion will be understood if we take both those statements together. It is not his intention that we should regard the incarnation's embodiment and experience of pain and pleasure as a false appearance and regard such things on our part alone as real. If we accept our own feelings and perceptions as real, we must accept those of an incarnation also as real. Therefore, what we have said before still stands.

12. This is discussed from another standpoint

This will be clearly understood if we discuss it from another standpoint. The scriptures say that two distinct conceptions of the world arise in us

when we look at it from the two planes of consciousness, the non-dual and the dual. If we ascend to the former plane and try to understand to what extent the thing we call the universe is real, we get the immediate knowledge that it does not exist and has never existed. There is nothing but the reality of Brahman, 'One only without a second'; while if we look at it from the dual plane, the world with the aggregate of various names and forms, appears to be real and eternally existent, even as it is now with us, ordinary human beings. Although possessed of bodies, the incarnations and the persons liberated in life, devoid of body-consciousness, dwell very often in the non-dual plane of consciousness. Therefore, they have the conviction, even when they live in the plane of duality, that the world is unreal like a dream. Though, compared with the waking state, a dream is known as unreal, the dream of a dreamer at the time of dreaming cannot be called absolutely unreal. Similarly, compared with the state of their absorption in Brahman, the semblance of the world in the minds of the incarnations and persons liberated in life, is unreal; but when they are not in Samadhi, it cannot be regarded as absolutely unreal.

13. Different conceptions of the world when looked at from higher and higher planes of consciousness

Just as the thing called the world is seen in two different ways from the two above-mentioned planes, so also a particular person in it is seen as two different beings from those two planes of consciousness. Seen from the plane of duality, he is known as a man in worldly bondage; and seen from the infinite non-dual plane, as Brahman, eternally free and eternally pure. The infinite non-dual plane is the highest region in the realm of ideas. The human mind passes through higher and higher planes of consciousness, before it reaches the non-dual plane, which is the goal. While the mind of the aspirant ascends to those higher and higher regions, both the universe and a particular individual in it assume for him different forms, and his previous conceptions of them change in various ways: for example, to him the world then seems to be made up of ideas only, and that particular individual appears to be separate from the body and endowed with extraordinary powers, or made up of mind or of the light celestial.

14. Man attains an exalted plane of consciousness through the power of incarnations and finds them devoid of human nature

If an ordinary man approaches an incarnation of God with devotion and reverence, he ascends unknowingly to the higher and higher planes of consciousness spoken of before. Of course, he gets that power of ascension owing to the incarnation's wonderful powers. It is therefore clear that the devout aspirant seeing the incarnations from the vantage-ground of the mental height newly scaled by him, comes to the conclusion that divinity endowed with wonderful powers is their real nature, and that they feign the assumption of human nature out of compassion for the ordinary man. As his devotion grows deeper, the devout aspirant is seen at first to have that conception about these devotees of God and afterwards about the whole world, His creation.

15. The evolutions of the minds of the incarnations of God. Jivas and incarnations of God differ in power only

It has already been said that as firm a belief in the reality of objects seen in the world of ideas in higher planes of consciousness as in that of things and persons seen in the ordinary world, is found from time to time in the lives of incarnations from their very childhood. As in course of time such visions very often repeat themselves in their lives, their faith in the existence of the world of ideas, as against that of the gross external world, grows in firmness. Ascending to the highest non-dual plane of consciousness, and getting the immediate knowledge of the reality of the "One only without a second" from which has manifested the universe of various names and forms, they at last realize perfection and reach the acme of their lives. The case is the same with persons liberated in life. But they have to make a lifelong effort to realize the truth, whereas the incarnations of God arrive at it in a very short time. Or, even if they can reach the non-dual plane in a short time, they get a very small amount of power, as compared with the incarnations, of making others ascend to that plane. Remember the Master's teaching on this matter: "The difference between a Jiva and an incarnation consists in the manifestation of powers only."

16. An incarnation, a god-man, is all-knowing

Enjoying the immediate knowledge of the cause of the universe, the incarnations dwell for a while in the non-dual plane and then descend to the lower planes of the mind. In the eyes of the ordinary people they still appear as human beings, but in reality they are not such; they have become supermen or god-men. After having the direct knowledge of both the universe and its cause, they feel the universe to be of a comparatively shadowy existence. The uncommon high powers of their minds then continue to manifest of themselves through them for the good of humanity. They have at that time the knowledge of the beginning, middle and end of all things, and attain, omniscience. It is then only that we, weak men, see their extraordinary character and action: their ambrosial words infuse hope in us and indicate to us that the realization of the ultimate truth or the immediate knowledge of the cause of the universe and the attainment of peace, are never possible, as long as we have outward mental modifications caused by persons and things of the external world.

17. The acquisition of the knowledge of the cause of the universe is impossible through the study of the natural sciences with the help of outward mental modifications

The reader, well versed in Western learning, will say, “Everything is spoilt now, you have only made your position weak by speaking like the frog-in-the-well of the fable. He who knows how far man’s knowledge has progressed and is daily progressing as the result of investigations into the things and persons of the external world, can never assert what you do.” To this we reply, we admit what you say about the progress of material sciences, but the ultimate truth can never be realized by you through them, for you are content to look upon the cause of the universe as insentient or as an entity inferior to, and of less consequence than yourselves. And with the progress of science, you have made the ever increasing enjoyment of sights, tastes, etc., the only aim of your lives. Therefore, even if it can be proved in future with the help of instruments that all the things of the world, sentient and insentient, owe their origin to one single insentient substance, the objects of the subjective realm will for ever remain for you unverified.

Unless it is realized by you that the path of man's liberation lies through the renunciation of the desire for enjoyment and through the acquisition of inwardness, you can never know the indivisible truth beyond time and space, and attain peace.

18. Spiritual absorption of incarnations even from their childhood

It has been said that all the incarnations were from time to time immersed in spiritual states from their childhood— *e.g.,* from time to time Krishna made his parents and friends realize his divinity in various ways even in his childhood; while strolling in the garden, Buddha entered into ecstasy under the holy fig tree in his childhood and attracted the notice of gods and men; Jesus attracted, by his love, sylvan birds in his childhood and fed them with his own hands; Sankara while a boy charmed and assured his mother by the influence of his spiritual power and renounced the world; and in his early years Chaitanya became inspired with spiritual emotions and gave the indication that a lover of God sees the manifestation of God in all things, good or bad. There is no lack of such events in the Master's life also. We mention a few here as examples for the reader to understand the point. These were recounted by the Master himself and we understood that it was very early in his life when for the first time he became merged in the realm of ideas. He said:

19. The Master's spiritual inspiration at the age of six

"In that part of the country (Kamarpukur) children are given parched rice to eat, in small baskets. Those who have no such baskets in their houses, eat it from the folds of their cloth. While loitering in the fields some boys eat it from baskets and others from the folds of their cloth. I was then six or seven years old. One morning I took parched rice in a small basket and was eating it while walking on the narrow balks in the corn fields. It was the month of Jyaishtha or Ashar. In one part of the sky there appeared a beautiful black cloud charged with rain. I was looking at it while eating the rice. Very soon the cloud covered almost the whole sky, when a flock of milk-white cranes flew against that black cloud. It looked so beautiful that I became very soon

absorbed in an extraordinary mood. Such a state came on me that my external consciousness was lost. I fell down and the rice got scattered near the balk. People saw this and carried me home. This was the first time that I lost external consciousness in ecstasy."

20. The Master's ecstasy for the second time while he was going to pay obeisance to Visalakshi

The village called Anur is situated about two miles north of Kamarpukur, the birth-place of the Master. Goddess Visalakshi of Anur is a living presence. The people of the surrounding villages, far and near, promise worship and offerings to the goddess for the fulfilment of various desires. And when they are fulfilled, they come to offer worship and sacrifices at the proper time. It needs no mention that women are comparatively more numerous amongst the visiting pilgrims. The desire for recovery from illness attracts here more people than other desires. It is even now seen that groups of village ladies of high families while coming to pay obeisance to her sing songs and tell stories about the first appearance and self-revelation of the goddess and travel across the fields without fear. Kamarpukur and neighbouring villages were more populous and prosperous during the Master's childhood than now. This becomes evident to us when we find the deserted broken brick-built houses overgrown with jungles, dilapidated and decayed temples, the platforms for religious dances, and the like. Therefore, we infer, that the pilgrims to the goddess[1] at Anur were then very numerous.

The goddess resides under the open sky, in the field. The cultivators build every year an ordinary covering of leaves to protect the place from rain and sun. There is an indication in the neighbouring heap of ruins that there was a brick-built temple at one time. Asked about it, the villagers say that the goddess has broken it down of her own accord. They narrate a story:

"The cowherd boys of the village are the dear companions of the goddess. They come there in the morning, let loose the cows and sit there; they tell stories, sing songs, and play games. They pluck wild flowers and decorate her. They take the money and the sweets offered to the goddess by pilgrims and wayfarers and enjoy themselves. She cannot do without these sweet pranks. Once a rich man of a village, having had his desire fulfilled,

built that temple and installed the goddess in it. The temple priest came as usual every morning and evening to perform the worship. But he now closed the door of the temple when he went away after the worship. Those who came to pay obeisance at times other than those of worship, offered their respectful presents to the deity through the trellis of the door. Consequently, the cowherd boys could no longer collect the money, buy sweets, offer them to the goddess, eat them, and make merry. Grieved in their hearts, they prayed imploringly, 'Mother, you have deprived us of our feast. Your money enabled us to have sweets daily. Who will now give us these things to eat?'

"The goddess," the villagers add, "heard the complaint of the simple-hearted peasant boys, and the temple developed such a big crack that very night that the next day the priest brought out the goddess hurriedly and placed her in the open lest the image should get buried under the debris of the temple. Since then, whoever has tried to build the temple again has been apprised in dreams or otherwise by the goddess that it is not to her liking." The villagers say that some of them were threatened and deterred from it by the goddess. She said to them in a dream, "I am all right here in the midst of the fields with the cowherd boys; if you confine me in a temple I will ruin you. I will not keep any of your family alive."

The Master was eight years old. He had not yet been invested with the sacred thread. One day many ladies of respectable families of the village went through the fields in a group, in the aforesaid manner, to fulfil their promise of offerings to Visalakshi. Among them were one or two ladies of the Master's own family and also Prasanna, the widowed sister of Dharmadas Laha. The Master had a high opinion of her purity, amiability, simplicity, and spirituality. He told the Holy Mother many a time to follow her advice in all matters. He also spoke of Prasanna from time to time to his women devotees. Prasanna too had a genuine affection for the Master from his childhood. She looked upon him very often as God Himself. As a simple-hearted woman, she was charmed to hear the holy stories of gods and goddesses and devotional songs from him. She would now and again affectionately ask him, "Gadai, why is it that you often seem to me to be God Himself? Yes, truly I feel so." Gadai heard it and sweetly smiled but said nothing; or, he brought in various other topics and tried to evade the

question. But Prasanna could not be evaded with those words. She said seriously with a nod, “Whatever you may say, you are not an ordinary mortal.” Prasanna built a temple and installed in it the images of Radha and Krishna and used to do everything for their daily service herself. Dramatic performances with songs and dances were held in that temple on festive occasions. But Prasanna listened to very little of the songs. Asked about it, she would say, “I have heard songs sung by Gadai and no other songs sound sweet. Gadai has spoilt my ears.” Of course, these events belonged to a much later date.

When he saw the ladies starting, the child Gadai said, “I will also go.” Although the ladies thought it would be difficult for the child to walk that distance and forbade him to accompany them, Gadai did not lend ear to what they said and started with them. At this the ladies were happy rather than annoyed, for who is not charmed by a child who is always cheerful and merry? Besides, even at that young age, Gadai had got by heart all the songs and verses about gods and goddesses. On the way, he would certainly repeat a few of them at their request. Moreover there would be no difficulty if he felt hungry while returning, for then there would be with them the offered articles of food, milk, etc. What could then be the objection? What was there to be annoyed at, if Gadai went with them? Thus the ladies thought over the matter and without hesitation started on their way with Gadai. And Gadai also went cheerfully with them, and as they expected, told stories and sang songs of gods and goddesses.

But as he was singing the glory of Visalakshi, an unexpected event happened before they had crossed the field. The child stopped singing suddenly; his body and limbs became stiff and benumbed. Streams of tears flowed incessantly from his eyes and he did not even reply to their repeated and affectionate calls as to what ailed him. The ladies were apprehensive that the child, unaccustomed to walking long distances, had a sunstroke. They brought water from a neighbouring pond and poured a little on his head and sprinkled some on his eyes. But he did not regain consciousness. They were anxious and felt very helpless. What was the way out? How was the promised offering to be given and the worship of the goddess performed? And how was another’s darling, Gadai, to be taken home safe? There was not a single man in the offing to help them. What was to be

done? The ladies were in a great fix and forgot all about gods and goddesses. They sat round the child and sometimes fanned him, sometimes sprinkled water on him and again called him by his name.

A short time passed this way, when Prasanna felt suddenly in her heart: "Might it not be that an ecstatic influence of the goddess has come on the simple-hearted and devoted child? Have I not heard it said that the ecstatic influence of deities comes on men, women and children who are pure and simple-hearted like him?" Prasanna expressed this thought of hers to the other ladies, and asked them to repeat with concentrated minds the name of Visalakshi instead of calling "Gadai". The ladies had a reverence for Prasanna on account of her pure character. They easily believed her words and addressed the boy as the goddess, and said again and again, "O Mother Visalakshi, be pleased; save us, Mother. Please be compassionate to us. Take us to a safe haven, Mother."

Wonder of wonders! No sooner had they called on the name of the goddess a few times than the face of Gadai brightened up with a sweet smile and signs of a slight external consciousness were seen. They felt reassured and were certain that an ecstatic influence of the goddess had come upon the child. They saluted him again and again, addressed him as Mother and prayed to him.[1]

The child regained external consciousness by degrees and was in his normal state again. But strange to say, no fatigue or weakness was observed in his body owing to the change which had come on him just a little while before. With overflowing devotion, the ladies then arrived at the place of the goddess with Gadai. They offered the worship duly, returned home and told everything to his mother. She was frightened, and offered that day a special worship to Raghuvir for the good of Gadai. She offered salutations to Visalakshi and vowed a special worship to her also.

Another event in the life of Sri Ramakrishna bears ample testimony to the fact that since childhood he ascended to high spiritual planes at times. It happened thus:

There lived a family of Suvarna-vanikas[1] a little to the south-west of the Master's ancestral house at Kamarpukur. That the Pynes were then very prosperous can be known even now from their brick-built Siva temple

decorated with artistic designs. One or two of the members of this family are still living; but the buildings are all in ruins. It is said by the people of the village that the Pynes were very rich then. The house was full of people. They were rich farmers also, having extensive lands and a large number of cattle and ploughs; they had also a decent income from their trade. But the Pynes were not rich like the landlords of the village. They belonged to the upper middle class of society.

The master of the Pyne family was a very religious man. He never tried to convert his dwelling house into a brick-built one, though he was in a position to do so. He always lived in a two-storeyed house[2] of mud walls. But he got bricks burnt, employed a good mason and got the temple beautifully built. His name was Rasiklal. He had no sons but had many daughters. We do not know why all the daughters, although married, always lived in their father's house. We are told that the youngest of them reached her youth when the Master was ten or eleven years of age. All the daughters were handsome and were devoted to the gods and the Brahmins. They had much affection for the boy Gadai, their neighbour. The Master spent much of his time in that religious family during his boyhood. And even now one is told of many "sports" of the Master in the house of the Pynes while in high planes of consciousness. But we heard from the Master himself of the event which we now describe.

It seems that the devotees of Vishnu and those of Siva lived together at Kamarpukur without bearing any ill-will towards each other. Even now the annual "seventy-two-hour singing of the glories of the names of Vishnu" is, like the "Gajan" of Siva, celebrated with great pomp. But the Siva temples and other places where Siva is installed, are greater than those of Vishnu. Many of the Suvarna-vanikas are bigoted Vaishnavas. The Vaishnava faith prevailed to a great extent among the people of this class since Lord Nityananda initiated Uddharan Datta and delivered him from worldly bondage. But the Pynes of Kamarpukur were the devotees of both Siva and Vishnu. On the one hand, the aged master of the Pyne family used to take the name of Hari thrice a day as prescribed, and on the other, he installed Siva and observed the vow of Sivaratri every year. At that time a dramatic performance was arranged so that it might help devotees keep vigil at night.

21. While acting as Siva on the occasion of the Sivaratri, the Master had ecstasy for the third time

Once on the occasion of the Sivaratri, there was an arrangement of dramatic performance. The troupe belonged to the neighbouring village; they were to play a few scenes indicative of Siva's greatness and the play was to begin about half an hour after dusk. At dusk it was learnt that the boy of the troupe who was to play Siva's role was seriously ill. No one else could be found to play that part, The proprietor gave up all hopes and proposed with humility that the performance be postponed. What was to be done? How could the vigil be kept during the night? The elderly people sat together for consultation. They sent word to the proprietor asking him whether he could conduct the drama that night if a person could be found to play the part of Siva. A reply came in the affirmative. The village council consulted again as to who might be asked to act as Siva. Although Gadai was young, he knew many songs of Siva and he had the appropriate looks for playing the part. So it was settled that he should be requested. As regards the speaking of a few words while playing that part, it would be managed by the proprietor somehow. Gadadhar was approached and when he saw that all were eager, he agreed. The play as arranged began about half an hour after nightfall.

Dharmadas Laha, the landlord of the village, was a close friend of the Master's father. So, his eldest son Gayavishnu and the Master also became friends. When Gayavishnu came to know that his friend would act as Siva, he and his friends began to dress him accordingly. The Master put on the dress of Siva, sat in the green-room and was thinking of Siva when he was called to appear on the stage. One of his friends came to lead him there. Called by his friend, the Master rose and without looking in any direction, in a preoccupied state of mind, approached the stage with a sedate and slow step, and stood there motionless. The audience felt a vague indescribable divine emotion and were filled with joy and wonder when they saw the Master in that dress, bedecked with ashes and matted hair, with a calm and dignified gait and in a fixed and motionless posture. They felt particularly charmed to witness that heavenly, indrawn and fixed gaze and that gentle smile on his lips. As the villagers are wont to do, they suddenly cried out

the name of Hari. Some of the women uttered the auspicious sound of “ulu” and some blew conchshells. Afterwards, in order to restore order in the audience, the proprietor began reciting hymns to Siva even before the noise subsided. Although the audience became a little calm, they made signs to and nudged one another whispering in low tones, “Bravo, how beautiful Gadai looks! We never thought the lad would act the part of Siva so well; it will be very good if we can secure the boy somehow and form a Yatra troupe of our own”; and so on and so forth. But Gadadhar was all the while standing in that same posture. Moreover, incessant streams of tears were flowing down his cheeks. Some time passed this way, but Gadadhar did not speak or move. Then the proprietor and one or two elderly men of the village went to the boy and saw that his hands and feet were insensitive and that he had no external consciousness at all. The noise then doubled. Some cried out, “Water, water. Sprinkle water over his eyes and face.” Some said, “Fan him”, some others, “An ecstatic influence of Siva has come on him; utter His name”, while some others murmured, “The boy has spoilt the whole amusement; it is certain that the play cannot continue now.” At last, the audience dispersed when the boy could not be brought to consciousness by any means. Some people carried Gadadhar home on their shoulders. That ecstasy, we are told, did not come to an end that night in spite of much effort, and there was much agitation in the house. He regained normal state the next day after sunrise.[1]

Footnote

1. See Sankara’s commentary on Adhyasa in the *Vedanta Aphorisms*.

1. It is difficult to ascertain whether the name of the goddess is Vishalakshmi or Visalakshi. Vishahari is another name of the goddess Manasa met with in ancient Bengali books. This word Vishahari may easily be transformed into Vishalakshmi. Again, in describing the form of Manasa, the word Visalakshi is used in books like the *Manasamangala.* So, Manasa is perhaps called by the names of Vishalakshmi or Visalakshi, who accepts people's worship here. The worship of the goddess is seen in many places. We saw a beautiful temple of that goddess on our way from kamarpukur to Ghatal. We were convinced that there had been a very good arrangement for worship there, when we saw the music hall, the tank, the garden, etc., attached to the temple.

1. Some say the women, out of an intensity of devotion, offered the boy the articles they carried for the goddess.

1. A trading class, originally traders (vanikas) in gold (suvarna).—Tr.

2. Made of bamboo, wood, straw and earth, but no bricks.

1. Some say that he was in that ecstatic state continuously for three days.

CHAPTER III
THE FIRST MANIFESTATION OF THE ATTITUDE OF A SADHAKA

1. Further examples of Master's absorption in spiritual moods in childhood

Besides the events already mentioned, many other facts regarding the Master's absorption in spiritual moods in childhood are known. We get indications of that nature of his mind in connection with many small matters.

Take for example: The village potter was making images of Siva, Durga, and other deities. The Master went there with his friends in the course of a walk. He looked on the images for some time and suddenly said, "What is that? Do the eyes of a god look like that? They should be made thus." Saying so, he explained to the potter the manner in which the lines should be fashioned and the eyes portrayed, so that the expression of superhuman power, compassion, inwardness, and bliss may be shown in the eyes and endow the image with a living, divine look. All were amazed to think how the boy Gadadhar could understand and explain all this without being taught that art. But none could find out the reason.

Or, desiring to worship some deity in boyish play with his friends, he made the image of that deity or delineated it on canvas so beautifully that people, seeing it, came to the conclusion that it was the handiwork of a skilful potter or painter.

Again, a voluntary and unexpected utterance of the Master to somebody removed a very long-standing doubt from his mind. The latter got the clue

and the power to regulate his future life wondering whether it was his chosen Ideal in the person of Gadai that out of compassion showed him the path.

Or else, the boy Gadai astonished all by solving with one word the problem which scholars, well versed in the scriptures, had failed to solve.

2. Six classes of those events of the Master's life

It is not true that every one of the wonderful events of the Master's early life which we heard proved the manifestation of his divine power as he passed into high planes of consciousness. Although some of them were of this nature, we may classify the others into six broad divisions, namely, those indicative of his wonderful memory, of his strong power of judgment, of his steadfastness and strong determination, of his infinite courage, of his love of merriment, and of his unlimited love and compassion. But purity, selflessness and unique faith were found running through all of them. It looks as if his mind was naturally made up of faith, purity and selflessness, and the various actions and reactions of the world in it gave rise from time to time to waves of memory, judgment, determination, courage, merriment, love and compassion. The reader will have a correct understanding of what we say when we give a few examples here.

3. An example of his wonderful memory

There had been in the village a theatrical performance on the theme of Rama's or Krishna's life. Many people including Gadadhar had witnessed it. All of them forgot the songs and the sacred words of the Puranas the next day and were busy following their selfish ends. But there was no end to the waves of spiritual emotions produced by them in the mind of Gadai. The boy assembled his friends in the neighbouring mango grove in order to rehearse them and enjoy the bliss thereof. He made all his friends get by heart, as far as possible, the parts of different characters of the play, and took upon himself the leading role and began to enact the drama. Simple-hearted cultivators, ploughing in the neighbouring fields, were charmed to

see that play of the boys, and wondered how, after hearing them only once, they could get by heart almost all the words and songs of the play.

4. An example of strong determination

At the time of his investiture with the sacred thread, the boy persisted, against the custom of his family and society, that he must have his first ceremonial alms from a blacksmith woman Dhani by name.[1] Or, charmed with her affection and devotion, and being aware of the desire of her heart, the boy forgot the restrictions of society, snatched curry, sauce, etc., cooked by that woman of low caste and ate them. In great fear, Dhani forbade him to do it, but could not make the boy desist.

5. An example of his infinite courage

Fear always arises in the minds of the boys of towns and villages when they see Naga Fakirs, with their matted hair and bodies covered with ashes. There is a belief current everywhere in Bengal that those Fakirs entice young boys; or, when opportunity arises, they abduct them to distant places and add to their own number. Groups of such Fakirs and Vairagis travelled daily in those days by the path to the south of Kamarpukur, leading to Puri, the abode of Jagannath. They would come to the village, beg their food, rest there for a day or two, and then start for their destination. Although Gadai's friends remembered that tradition and were frightened, he was not a person to be afraid of this. He mixed with the groups of mendicants as soon as he saw them and pleased them by his service and sweet conversation. He used to spend much time with them in order to observe their conduct and behaviour. Requested lovingly by them, he took, on some days, the food offered by them to their deity before he returned home to tell it to his mother. Desirous of being dressed like them, out of love for the holy men, he one day put on Tilakas all over his body, and tearing the new piece of cloth given by his parents into Kaupina and loin-cloth, wore them in their fashion and came to his mother.

6. Examples of his love for merriment

Many of the people of the low class in the village did not know to read the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. When they had a mind to hear those books read out, they invited a Brahmin or one of their own class who could explain the epics to them. When that person arrived, they offered him water to wash his feet, a smoke of tobacco, a good seat to sit on while reading, and lacking this, a new mat. Honoured thus, he swelled with pride and egotism. Fond of merriment, the keenly intelligent boy observed how he occupied an elevated seat before the audience and how many were the odd gestures and tones with which he read the books and displayed his superiority to them. All these the boy would sometimes mimic before others with a grave face which would give rise to great fun and peals of laughter.

7. Natural constitution of the Master's mind

By a study of these facts of the Master's early life, we realize the nature of the mind with which he was equipped to undertake spiritual discipline. We feel that such a mind could not but accomplish whatever it undertook, would never forget what it heard, and would at once throw away mercilessly whatever it came to know to be an obstacle in its path to the realization of its desired end. We realize that such a heart would perform all actions in the world placing firm reliance on God, on itself, and on the divine nature hidden within all human beings. No ideas having the slightest tinge of narrow-mindedness would be acceptable to it, let alone mean, impure ones; and love, purity, and compassion alone would regulate it all the time in all matters. It will also be realized that no idea, either within his own heart or within those of others, would be able to deceive him by disguising its nature. Before proceeding to study his Sadhanas we shall be able to understand their uniqueness if we closely remember what has been said about the constitution of his heart and mind.

8. The first manifestation of the mood of an aspirant — "I will learn not the 'art of bundling rice and plantain' but that which produces right knowledge"

We see the first definite manifestation of the attitude of an aspirant in the Master's life, when he was in his brother's school in Calcutta—on the day when Ramkumar, his eldest brother, admonished him to apply his mind to the acquisition of learning, to which he clearly replied, "I do not want to learn, the art of 'bundling rice and plantain'. What I do want is to have that which produces right knowledge and enables man truly to achieve the aim of his life". He was then about seventeen years of age. Knowing that there was little chance of his education progressing in the village school, his guardians consulted one another and brought him to Calcutta. His religious-minded eldest brother, well versed in Astrology and Smriti, had started a Sanskrit school near the house of the late Digambar Mitra at Jhamapukur and was teaching some pupils. He took charge of the daily service of deities in some rich families of that quarter, besides the Mitra family. It took him most of his time to give lessons to students after finishing his daily religious duties. Therefore, it proved very difficult for him in a short time to go twice daily to different houses and perform the service. Nor was he at the same time able to give it up so hastily, for the income from the school by way of farewell gifts was very small and was daily decreasing. How could the household affairs be managed if he gave up what he was receiving as fee for the service of the deities? Weighing these ideas in his mind, at last he brought his youngest brother to Calcutta, placed him in charge of the service of the deities and applied himself to the work of teaching.

9. The Master's activities at the Jhamapukur Tol in Calcutta

On arriving at Calcutta, Gadadhar got his favourite work and performed it with pleasure. Besides serving his eldest brother he also studied a little. Possessed of noble qualities, the pleasant-looking boy became dear to all the people in a short time. The veiled ladies of the respectable families of this place, even like those of Kamarpukur, did not feel any hesitation in appearing before him when they became acquainted with his smartness, guileless behaviour, sweet conversation and devotion to the gods. They were eager to get some odd jobs done by him and to listen to his devotional songs. Here also as in Kamarpukur, the boy became a centre of attraction of a group of loving people round him without any effort on his part.

Whenever he had leisure the boy met those men and women and joyfully spent some time in their company. Therefore, it is clear that the boy made no better progress in his studies here.

Although Ramkumar observed all this, he could not suddenly mention it to his brother, for he had already deprived the mother's dear youngest pet child of the pleasure of her affection and had brought him far away, practically for his own convenience. Should he, over and above this, put obstacles in the way of the boy's enjoyment when, attracted by his noble qualities, people were lovingly inviting him to their houses and the boy too felt happy at that? And if he did so, would not the life of the boy in Calcutta be as unbearable as in a forest? If there were no wants in the family, it would not have been necessary at all to take the boy away from his mother. It would have been enough if the boy had been sent to some village near Kamarpukur to study under a learned scholar. In that case, the boy might have been with his mother and been educated at the same time. Although Ramkumar did not complain for some time on account of these considerations, still, urged by a sense of duty, he admonished the boy mildly one day and asked him to apply his mind to studies. For, some day, the simple-hearted, self-forgetful boy would have to fend for himself. If he did not now learn how to guide himself on the path leading to the improvement of his worldly affairs, could he do so in future? Therefore, it is clear that brotherly love and worldly experience moved Ramkumar to act that way.

10. Ramkumar's ignorance of the nature of his brother's mind

Although he had fallen into difficulties arising out of the selfish, harsh ways of the world and acquired some experience, the affectionate Ramkumar did not know much of the extraordinary nature of the mind of his youngest brother. He could not realize even in his dream that, young as he looked, the boy could detect the cause of the lifelong labour and efforts of the worldly man and knowing ephemeral fame and enjoyment to be worthless, could fix a different aim for human life. Unmoved by the rebuke, when the simple-hearted boy told him the thoughts of his heart in the above-mentioned way, he could not comprehend his words. He thought that the boy, a pet of his parents, was piqued or annoyed at being thus scolded

for the first time in his life, and had, therefore, answered him in that way. That day, the truthful boy tried his best to explain to him the thoughts of his heart; he expressed variously the idea that he did not feel inclined to go in for a bread-winning education. But who would listen to the words of the boy? A boy is after all a boy; if even a grown-up person is seen to be above selfish effort we solemnly declare that his brain has been deranged.

That day Ramkumar did not understand those words of the boy. Moreover, just as when we chastise an object of our love, we repent it the next moment and try to regain our peace of mind by loving him a hundredfold more than before, so also Ramkumar behaved with his brother for some time after this. But, when we see the series of Gadadhar's actions, one after another, we get a clear proof of the fact that since then he was seeking an opportunity to fulfil the desire of his heart.

11. The worldly condition of Ram-kumar

The current of events in the life of the Master and his eldest brother flowed a little fast during the next two years after this event. The pecuniary condition of his brother was daily deteriorating and although he tried in various ways, he could not improve it. He pondered much in his mind whether he should close his school and take to some other job. But he could not come to any decision. He could clearly understand in his heart of hearts that if he spent his days that way instead of soon adopting some other means for the management of his worldly affairs, he would be involved in debts and consequently suffer. But what means was he to adopt? For he had learnt no other occupation than those of teaching, performing sacrifices and officiating in them. And had he the energy and perseverance at this period of life to make an attempt to learn some lucrative profession suited to the times? Again, even if he did acquire an art of that nature and tried to earn money, it would surely be difficult for him to get time to perform worship, and his daily religious duties. So, deciding to "let Raghuvir shape his destiny according to His will", he turned his mind from these thoughts and continued to do with a broken heart what he had been so far doing. For, we think, Ramkumar, who had great faith in God, was content with a little, and being good-natured, was not very pushing in worldly life. There now

occurred, by the will of God, an event which showed Ramkumar a way out of that uncertainty and relieved him of all anxiety.

Footnote

1. Page 54.

CHAPTER IV
THE KALI TEMPLE AT DAKSHINESWAR

1. The cause of Ramkumar's starting the Tol in Calcutta. The date of the starting

Probably Ramkumar was forty-five when he started his Tol in Calcutta in A.D. 1850. Worldly wants, mishaps, etc., had caused him anxiety for some time past. His wife died after giving birth to her only son Akshay. It is said that the Sadhaka Ramkumar predicted the death of his wife and said to some members of the household that she would not survive that period. The Master had then reached his fourteenth year. Many rich and middle class people lived in the wealthy city of Calcutta; Ramkumar could remain free from worldly anxiety if he could make the students of the school proficient in learning, as it would enhance his reputation as a scholar as well. He could perform religious worship and give written opinions on religious matters, which would fetch a few additional rupees. Some such thought was perhaps instrumental in bringing Ramkumar to Calcutta, when he was mourning the death of his wife. Or it may be that at the death of his wife he felt a great change and void in his life, and the idea that he would be free from them to a certain extent if he were engaged in various works in a far-off place made him take up that course. We have told the reader earlier the purpose for which he brought the Master to Calcutta a few years after the inception of the school at Jhamapukur, and the manner in which the Master spent the first three years after his arrival there in A.D. 1852.

We must turn our attention elsewhere, if we want to know the events of the Master's life since that period. The reader must now direct his attention to the series of events that were taking place by the will of God in a very well-known family in another quarter in Calcutta. At that time Ramkumar

had enrolled himself in the party of Chatu Babu in order to increase his income from farewell gifts and improving the condition of his school.

Sri Ramakrishna in ecstasy

Dakshineswar Temples

Bhavatarini Kali Temple, Dakshineswar

Sri Sri Bhavatarini, Dakshineswar

Radhakanta, Dakshineswar

Broken foot of Radhakanta which Sri Ramakrishna repaired

Sri Ramakrishna’s Room, Dakshineswar

Nahavat and Sri Ramakrishna's Room

Sri Sarada Devi's Room in Nahavat

Panchavati (earlier days)

Panchavati

Bel Tree, place of Tantric Sadhana

Sadhana Kutir, place of Vedantic Sadhana

Place of Islamic Sadhana

Ramalala

Mother Mary and Child Jesus

Rani Rasmani

Mathura Mohan Biswas

Shambu Mallick

Hriday

Ramlal

Lakshmi

2. Rani Rasmani

The famous Rani Rasmani lived in Janbazar in the south of Calcutta. She was the mother of four daughters and became a widow at forty-four. She inherited the huge property of her husband Rajchandra Das. Since then she had managed it herself and improved it much and had thus become well known to the people of Calcutta. She became famous and endeared herself to all, not merely by her ability in managing the property, but also by her innumerable other virtues and good actions, such as her faith in God, her energy,[1] courage, intelligence and presence of mind, and above all, her sympathy for the poor[2] expressed through her unceasing gifts and unstinted distribution of food to all. By her noble qualities and actions, she, although born in a Kaivarta family, proved herself worthy of her appellation, "The Rani", and attracted the heart-felt love and reverence of all groups of people irrespective of caste. The Rani's daughters were married and had children at the time we are speaking of. Then the third daughter of the Rani had died and had left behind only a son. Thinking that the said event would estrange the debonair Mathuranath, her third son-in-law, from the family, the Rani married her fourth daughter Jagadamba Dasi to him and made him her own again. The descendants of the four daughters of the Rani are living till this day.[3]

3. The Rani's devotion to the goddess

Endowed with many virtues, Rani Rasmani bore great devotion to the holy feet of the goddess Kali. “Sri Rasmani Dasi, longing for the Feet of Kali” were the words engraved in the official seal of her estate. We have heard from the Master himself that the Rani’s devotion to the goddess was expressed in all her words and actions.

4. The Rani got divine instruction when she was getting ready to go to Kasi

The Rani, it is said, had cherished in her heart for a long time a strong desire to go to Kasi and pay obeisance and offer special worship to Visvesvara, the Lord of the universe, and Annapurna, the divine Mother. It is also said that she had collected and set apart a vast sum of money for that purpose. But, as her husband had died suddenly and she had had to shoulder the responsibility of managing the whole property, she had not been able to carry out her intention so far. Now that her sons-in-law had learned to help her in this matter and particularly the youngest, Mathuramohan, had become her right-hand man, she was getting ready to start for Kasi. When everything was ready, she had the vision of the goddess in a dream the night before her departure.[1] The goddess gave her this instruction: “There is no need to go to Kasi; install my stone image in a beautiful spot on the bank of the Bhagirathi and arrange for my daily worship and food offering; I shall manifest myself in the image and accept your worship daily.” The devout Rani was highly delighted to receive this instruction. She put off going to Kasi and made up her mind to spend the accumulated money on that holy undertaking.

5. The Rani built the temple

We cannot say how far that rumour is true, but it is certain that the Rani’s long accumulated devotion to the Mother of the universe was about to assume a visible form in the shape of the temple and the image. She purchased a spacious piece of land on the bank of the Bhagirathi, spent a large sum of money and began to build on it a big temple with nine spires and other small temples, and laid out a garden attached to them. Though the

work of construction was going on for seven or eight years, the whole edifice was not completed even in A.D. 1855. But the Rani reflected within herself, “As life is uncertain, the desire of installing the Mother of the universe may not be fulfilled in my lifetime, if it takes such a long time to complete the temple.” Revolving in her mind thus, the Rani had the ceremony of the installation of the Mother performed on the Snanayatra day on May 31, A.D. 1855. As it is necessary for the reader to know a few events that took place before this, we narrate them below.

6. The Rani’s desire to offer cooked food to the goddess

Either because of the “instruction” she received from the goddess herself or out of a natural hankering of her heart-for devotees always love to serve their chosen Ideals with things they consider best-there arose a great eagerness in the mind of the Rani to offer cooked food daily to the Mother. The Rani thought: “Temples and other buildings have been built to my liking. I am going to dedicate property sufficient for the carrying on of the service. But, in spite of doing all this, if I cannot serve Her to my heart’s content and offer Her cooked food daily, everything will be in vain. It will fetch me at the most a little name; people will say, ‘Rani Rasmani has left behind her such a glory!’ But, of what avail are such words of the people to me?” “O Mother of the universe,” she fervently prayed, “Thou hast given me much name and fame in other respects, but in this case do not befool me by giving me this trash. It does not matter whether fame accrues to me or not, but pray remain always actually manifested here and fulfil the heart’s desire of this servant of Thine by accepting daily service.”

7. She procured Sastric opinions from Pandits. These proved to be obstacles to the fulfilment of her desire

The Rani saw that her low birth and the custom of society were the main obstacles standing in the way of her offering cooked food. Her own heart however, never doubted that the Mother of the universe would accept her offering of cooked food; in fact, for heart was always full of joy at that thought, and was never hesitant. Why was then that improper custom

current? Who wrote the scriptures? Was the author of the scriptures a heartless man? Or, urged by self-interest, did he ordain a right for the higher castes superior even to the goddess? If so, she had no use for such scriptures. She would rather follow the sacred longings of her heart. But what was the way out even then? Were she to act against the prevailing custom, the devout Brahmins and good people would not come to the temple to take Prasada. What was then the solution? The Rani had the written opinions of Pandits brought from various places. But none of them was to her liking.

8. Ramkumar gave his opinion in her favour

Although the construction of the temple and the making of the image had been completed, there was no sign of the fulfilment of the Rani's desire to serve Her to her heart's content. The Rani had scriptural prescriptions from scholars, big and small, but failed to have her wish fulfilled. When all her hopes were almost dashed to the ground, one day a prescription came from the Chatuspathi at Jhamapukur, which read, "If the Rani makes a gift of the property to a Brahmin and he installs the goddess in the temple and makes arrangements about the offering of cooked food, the principle of the scriptures will be accurately observed; and the Brahmins and other high castes will not then incur blemish if they take Prasada in the temple."

9. The Rani decided to consecrate the temple

Hopes revived in the Rani's heart. She decided to consecrate the temple in the name of her Guru and, with his permission, take the position of an officer for superintending his property and the service in his temple. Afterwards the Rani informed other Pandits of her intention of following the scriptural prescription given by Ramkumar. Although they did not dare say plainly that it would be an unscriptural action, they nevertheless said, "The action is against the prevailing custom of society; the Brahmins and other good people will not take Prasada there even though it is done that way."

10. Ramkumar's catholicity

We can very well infer that the Rani's attention was very much attracted to Ramkumar by this event. When one ponders, one finds that to issue such a prescription in those days was indicative of not a little catholicity on the part of Ramkumar. The minds of the Brahmin Pandits, the leaders of society, had got confined to a narrow groove in those days. There were few amongst them who could step out of it, read a liberal meaning in the injunctions of the scriptures and give opinions according to circumstances. Consequently people felt an inclination to set at naught their opinions.

11. The Rani's search for a suitable priest

The connection of the Rani with Ramkumar, however, did not end there. Although she paid proper respect to the members of the family of her spiritual teacher, the intelligent Rani observed distinctly their ignorance of the scriptures and unfitness to perform divine service according to them. Therefore, she made up her mind to see that the whole charge of the service of the new temple was permanently placed in the hands of Brahmins of virtuous conduct, well versed in the scriptures, taking care at the same time that the just and proper farewell gifts etc., due to her Guru's family were not affected. Here again, the prevailing custom of society stood in her way. In those days, the Brahmins born of good families and devoted to religious traditions did not even salute the deities installed by Sudras, let alone worshipping them. They regarded the degraded Brahmins, such as the family of the Rani's spiritual teacher, virtually as Sudras. It was therefore no wonder that no Brahmin of virtuous conduct, able to perform worship and officiate as a priest, agreed to take charge of the worship in the Rani's temple. However, the Rani did not give up hope, and increasing the remuneration and the pay, continued to search for a priest in various places.

12. Maheshchandra, an officer of the Rani, took the responsibility of procuring priests

The home of Hemangini Devi, the Master's cousin, was in the village of Sihar, not far from Kamarpukur. Many Brahmins lived there. One

Maheshchandra Chattopadhyaya of that village served in the estate of the Rani. Thinking perhaps that he might be able to earn a little money thereby, he came forward to procure Brahmins for the Rani's temples to work as priests, cooks, etc. Mahesh undertook to make that arrangement and selected his elder brother Kshetranath for the post of a priest in the temple of Radha-Govinda, either with a view to convincing the poor Brahmins of the village that accepting employment in the Rani's temples was not reprehensible, or with a view to improving the pecuniary condition of his family, or both. As he appointed one of his own family to work for the Rani, it became easy to a great extent to procure other Brahmins for service in the temples. But he became very anxious when, in spite of much effort, he could not procure a fit priest for the Kali temple.

13. The Rani requested Ramkumar to accept the office of the priest

Mahesh had been for a long time acquainted with Ramkumar. It seems, they had a conventional relationship established between them, which we can infer from the village custom. It was not unknown to Mahesh that Ramkumar was a devout Sadhaka and had long ago become initiated in the Mantra of Sakti of his own accord. We infer that Mahesh knew of the want and insufficiency in Ramkumar's household. So his attention was drawn to Ramkumar at the time of seeking a priest for the temple of the Mother Kali. But the next moment he remembered that Ramkumar was a Brahmin who did not officiate in sacrifices performed by Sudras. Although he sometimes accepted the post of a priest in the houses of Digambar Mitra and others in Calcutta, would he accept it in the temple of the Rani, who was a Kaivarta by birth? It was very doubtful. But the day for the installation of the goddess was near at hand and a suitable priest was not available yet. Revolving all this in his mind, Mahesh thought it reasonable to make an effort once at least in that direction. However, he did not himself immediately set about doing that. He told the Rani everything and asked her to invite and request Ramkumar to accept the office of the priest for the day of the installation at least and perform all the rites on that day. The Rani had already a high opinion of Ramkumar's fitness as she got the scriptural prescription from him. So she was much delighted at the prospect of his

officiating as the priest and sent him word with great humility. “I am now ready to install the Mother of the universe on the strength of your prescription,” wrote she, “and have also arranged everything in order to perform that ceremony at an auspicious moment on the day of the coming Snanayatra. We have got a priest for Radha-Govinda. But no suitable Brahmin is coming forward to officiate as the priest of the Mother Kali and help me in the act of Her installation. Therefore, please make an arrangement that may seem possible to you and deliver me from this predicament. As you are a good scholar, well-versed in the scriptures, it is needless for me to tell you that anyone and everyone cannot be appointed to officiate as the priest.”

Mahesh himself went to Ramkumar with the letter conveying the request, explained the situation to him in various ways and prevailed upon him to agree to officiate as the priest until a suitable one was available. The devout Ramkumar, devoid of avarice, came at first to Dakshineswar[1] lest the installation of the universal Mother should have to be given up. Then at the humble request of the Rani and Mathur Babu, he lived there for the rest of his life, as he saw that there was no other suitable priest available. All events of the world, great or small, come to pass by the will of the divine Mother. Who can say whether or not Ramkumar, a devotee of the goddess, knew the will of the Source of all wills and accepted that office?

14. Installation of the goddess by the Rani

The Rani got Ramkumar to officiate as the priest in that unexpected way and installed the Mother of the universe in the new temple with great pomp on Thursday, May 31, A.D. 1855, the day of the Snanayatra. It is said that on that occasion the temple was continuously filled day and night with the noise of feasts and festivities. The Rani spent money unstintedly and did her best to make all the guests and others as happy as herself. Many professors of the Sastras and Brahmin Pandits came on that occasion from places famous for scholars, places such as the distant Kanyakubja, Kasi, Sylhet, Chittagong, Orissa, Navadvip, etc. Each of them got a silk cloth, a wrapper and gold coins as farewell presents. The Rani, it is said, spent nine hundred thousand rupees on the building and the consecration ceremony of the

temple. She purchased from Trailokyanath Thakur for two hundred and twenty-six thousand rupees the Salbari Parganah in the sub-division of Thakurgaon in the district of Dinajpur and executed a deed of gift and dedicated the property to the service of the deities.

15. How the Master behaved on the installation day

Some say that Ramkumar was given provisions and he cooked them that day with his own hands on the bank of the Ganga. And after offering the cooked food to his own chosen Ideal, he took it as Prasada. But this sounds improbable, for, Ramkumar, a devotee of the goddess, had himself given the prescription about the offering of cooked food according to his knowledge of the scriptures, and without the expectation of any gain. It is quite unreasonable that he himself should not take that offered food and should act against his own prescription and the injunction of the devotional scriptures. The Master also did not tell us so. Therefore, our impression is that at the end of the worship he took joyfully the cooked food offered to the Mother of the universe. But, although the Master joined the joyous festival whole-heartedly, he acted according to his strict principle regarding food. He bought from the neighbouring market a pice worth of fried rice at the approach of the evening and ate it before he walked back to the school at Jhamapukur for his rest at night.

16. What the Master said about the founding of the Kali temple

The Master himself told us on many occasions many things about the founding by Rasmani of the Dakshineswar Kali temple. He used to say: “Rani Rasmani made ready to go to Kasi, the abode of Visvanatha and Annapurna. She fixed a day for starting and had about a hundred small and big boats laden with various articles at the Ghat. She got a prohibitory instruction from the goddess on the night immediately before the day of starting and gave up that resolve. She then engaged herself in searching for a fit plot of land to build the temple on.”

He said further: “Under the conviction that ‘the western bank of the Ganga is comparable to Varanasi’, she at first searched for a piece of land in

villages like Bali and Uttarpara on the western bank of the Ganga but failed to get one.[1] For although the Rani was ready to pay a vast sum of money, the famous landlords of those places said that they would not come to the Ganga down a Ghat constructed at the cost of anyone else at any place in their possession. Therefore, the Rani was compelled at last to buy this spot on the eastern bank of the Ganga."

He used to say: "A part of the piece of land selected by the Rani at Dakshineswar belonged to an Englishman. In the other part of the land there was a Muslim graveyard, associated with the memory of a holy man. The piece of land had the shape of the back of a tortoise. Such a graveyard, according to the Tantras, is very commendable for the installation of Sakti and for Her Sadhana. Therefore, as if guided by Providence, the Rani chose this piece of land."

Again, he would raise the topic why the Rani installed the Mother of the universe on the Snanayatra day, a day of the festival connected with Vishnu, instead of on any other day auspicious for the installation of Sakti and say: "The Rani practised severe austerities according to the scriptures from the day on which the making of the image began; she bathed three times a day, took simple food, lay on the floor and practised Japa, worship, etc., according to her capacity. When the temple was built and the image made, an auspicious day was going to be leisurely fixed for the installation; and the image was kept packed in a box lest it should be damaged. But it suddenly perspired for some reason or other and the Rani got the command in a dream, 'How long will you keep me confined this way? I feel suffocated; install me as soon as possible.' No sooner had she got that instruction than the Rani became flurried and had the almanac consulted for an auspicious day. But, as no such day could be found before the Snanayatra, she resolved to perform the installation on that day."

Besides this, we heard from the Master many other things including the consecration of the temple in the name of the Rani's Guru so that cooked food might be offered to the goddess. We heard from Hriday two things only: firstly, that Ramkumar gave the scriptural prescription to the Rani about the consecration of the temple, and secondly, that he had recourse to the practice of Dharmapatra[1] to convince the Master of the propriety of his accepting the office of the temple priest.

We can know from the Master's behaviour at this time that Ramkumar had at first no mind to accept permanently the office of priest at the Dakshineswar Kali temple. When we reflect over the event, it seems to us that the simple-hearted Ramkumar did not understand it at that time. He thought that he would give the prescription regarding the offering of cooked food to the goddess and return to Jhamapukur after personally offering cooked food on the day of the installation.

We come to the conclusion from his behaviour towards his younger brother at this time that he was not at all hesitant about offering cooked food and that he did not think he was doing anything wrong and unscriptural. We shall explain these things to the reader here.

Early next morning, the Master came to Dakshineswar either to inquire about his brother or to witness, out of curiosity, the ceremonies that were left over from the previous day. He was there for some time, when he saw that there was no probability of his brother's returning to Jhamapukur that day. Therefore, although requested by his brother to stay there for the day, he did not obey him and returned to Jhamapukur at the time of his taking food. The Master did not go to Dakshineswar for about a week since then. He was staying at Jhamapukur thinking that his brother would return there in due time, after finishing the ceremonies at Dakshineswar. But when Ramkumar did not return even after a week, he grew anxious and came to Dakshineswar again to get news of his brother. He then came to know that Ramkumar had agreed to assume permanent charge of the worship of the divine Mother at the importunate request of the Rani. No sooner had he heard it than there arose various thoughts in his mind. He reminded his brother that their father neither officiated in the sacrifices of the Sudras nor accepted gifts from all, and tried to dissuade him from that course. It is said that Ramkumar tried to vindicate his action to the Master in various ways with the help of reason and scripture, but nothing touched his heart. Therefore he had recourse to the simple expedient of Dharmapatra, the leaf of impartiality, at last. The leaf of impartiality, it is said, read, "Ramkumar has not incurred blame in accepting the office of the priest. It will prove beneficial to all."

17. The steadfastness of the Master regarding food

Although the Master now became free from anxiety regarding his brother's decision, another thought occupied his mind. He thought over what he was to do, now that the Chatuspathi was abolished. The Master remained absorbed in that thought and did not return to Jhamapukur that day. But he could not be made to agree to take Prasada in the temple in spite of Ramkumar's loving persuasion. Ramkumar said, "It is a temple and the food is cooked with the water of the Ganga; besides, it has been offered to the Mother of the universe; it will not be reprehensible for you to take it." But these words did not appeal to the Master. So Ramkumar said, "Then take uncooked provisions from the temple store, cook them with your own hands on the sands of the Ganga under the Panchavati and have your meal. Don't you accept that the Ganga purifies everything on its banks and bed?" The Master's strict principle regarding food had now to yield to his devotion to the Ganga. His faith and devotion accomplished what Ramkumar, well-versed in the Sastras, could not do with the help of so much reasoning. The Master agreed, and continued to stay at Dakshineswar and take his daily meal prepared by himself in this way.

18. The Master's devotion to the Ganga

Ah, what a deep devotion to the Ganga the Master had all his life! He used to call the water of the Ganga, Brahma-vari, i.e., Brahman in the form of water. He said, "Any person living on either bank of the Ganga has his heart changed into one like that of gods, and virtues manifest therein of themselves. The wind filled with the sacred particles of the water of the Ganga purifies the land on both sides as far as it blows. By the grace of the Bhagirathi, the daughter of the great mountain, goodness, austerity, generosity, devotion to God, and spiritual steadfastness are always manifest in the lives of the people living in those parts of the land." If anybody talked of worldly things for a long time or mixed with worldly people, the Master would ask him to drink a little of the water of the Ganga. If a man, averse to God and attached to worldliness, sat in any part of the sacred abode of the divine Mother and polluted it by worldly thoughts, he would sprinkle there the water of the Ganga. He felt much pained if he saw anybody cleaning himself with that water after answering calls of nature.

19. The Master took his daily food cooked by himself and lived at Dakshineswar

The garden situated on the bank of the beautiful river and beautified with the Panchavati filled with the songs of birds, the divine service well performed by a devout Sadhaka in the beautiful spacious temple, the genuine affection of his father-like eldest brother, and the faith and devotion of the virtuous Rani Rasmani devoted to gods and the twice-born, and of Mathur Babu, her son-in-law—all these very soon made the Dakshineswar temple immensely attractive to the Master, who gradually made it his own, even like his home at Kamarpukur. Indeed he cooked his daily food for some time, but he lived there with a cheerful mind and discarded that attitude of uncertainty regarding his future duty.

20. The difference between illiberality and religious steadfastness

On hearing of the firm principle of the Master regarding food, some will perhaps think, "Such illiberality is generally seen in the minds of men like ourselves. Do you mean to say, by mentioning this instance that the ultimate goal of spirituality cannot be realized if one is not similarly illiberal?". We say in reply, "Illiberality and religious steadfastness are not the same thing. The former is born of egoism. When it prevails, a man sets the highest value on what he himself understands and does, and thus circumscribing himself remains unconcerned. But the latter is born of the faith in the teachings of the scriptures and great souls; when it prevails, man curbs his egoism, makes progress in his spiritual life and gradually realizes the supreme truth. When that firm principle predominates, a person may, in the beginning, appear to be illiberal for some time; but he receives with its help, clearer and clearer light on the path of his life and the limiting narrowness vanishes of itself. Therefore, how can we deny that steadfastness is absolutely necessary on the path to spiritual progress?" Acquainted with this quality in the Master's life in the manner mentioned above, we understand clearly that we too will be endowed with true liberality in time, and attain the ultimate peace, if we go forward to realize spiritual truths with a single-minded devotion to the teachings of the scriptures, and not otherwise. We have 'to remove one thorn by another' as the Master used to say. We must have

recourse to religious steadfastness in order to reach the liberality of truth—we must follow rules and regulations in order to reach the state beyond them.

Noticing this imperfection in the beginning of youth in the Master's life, some will perhaps say, "Why should he then be called an incarnation of God? Why not call him a man? But if you must make God of him, it is better to conceal such imperfections when you go to write his life." We say, "Brother, there was a time when we also never believed it possible even in a dream that God assumed a human body and incarnated Himself. When, however, by His unbounded selfless grace, He made us understand that it was possible, we found that with the assumption of the human body, He had to assume the imperfections of the human mind in the same way as those of the human body. The Master used to say, 'The shape of an ornament cannot be given to gold etc., if it does not contain some alloy.' He never made the slightest attempt to conceal those imperfections from us, yet he clearly told us over and over again, 'The One who became Rama and Krishna, has now come into this case (showing his body); but His coming down this time is incognito, just like a king going in disguise to see round the capital. It is like that.' "

Footnote

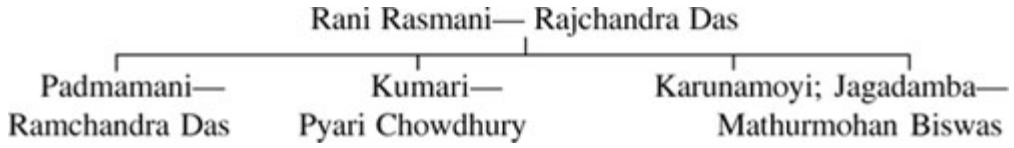
1. There was, it is said, a barrack of English soldiers situated near the Janbazar house of the Rani. Drunk and unrestrained, the soldiers, one day, overcame the gate keepers by force, entered the house and began to plunder it. Mathur Babu, the son-in-law of the Rani and other men folk were then out on business. Unopposed, the soldiers were almost ready to enter the inner apartment, when the Rani took up arms, ready to oppose them personally.

2. It is said that the British Government imposed a tax on the fishermen for catching fish in the Ganga. Many of these fishermen dwelt in the estate of the Rani. Oppressed on account of the imposition of tax, they narrated their tale of sorrow to her. The Rani heard it and told them not to be afraid. For a big sum of money she took on lease that part of the river for catching fish. The Government thought that the Rani would carry on a business in fish. And as soon as the said right was obtained, the Rani put chains across the river in many places. This made it almost impossible for ships and other vessels of the Government to enter the river. When the Government protested against that action of the Rani, she sent word, " I have purchased the right of catching fish in the

river on payment of a large sum of money to you. What I have done is in accordance with that right. If ships and other vessels always pass through the river, the fish will flee elsewhere and I shall stand to lose much. How can I, therefore, remove the chains from the river? But, if you agree to abolish the new tax on the right to catch fish in the river, I, for my part, am ready to give up my right voluntarily. There will otherwise be litigation and the Government will have to pay damages to me." It is said that owing to that reasonable statement of the Rani and also knowing that she was doing so in order to protect the poor fishermen, the Government abolished that tax in a short time. The fishermen then caught fish free of any tax and blessed the Rani.

The Rani evinced great interest in all matters conducive to the good of the people. We find the proof of it in the markets at Sonai, Beleghata and Bhawanipur; in the Ghat and the house for the dying at Kalighat; in the Ghat at Ganga at Halisahar; in the road to Puri for some distance from the other side of Suvarnarekha; and in many other virtuous acts. The Rani went on pilgrimage to Gangasagar, Triveni, Navadwip, Agradwip and Puri, and spent vast sums of money in the names of gods. Moreover, she protected the tenants of the estate of Makimpur against the oppression of the indigo planters. She spent ten thousand rupees and got the Madhumati connected with the Navaganga by the canal of Tona. These and various other acts of public utility stand to her credit.

3. For the information of the reader we quote here a genealogical table of Rani Rasmani from the booklet *Sri Dakshineswar:*



1. Some say that Rani Rasmani started by boat and came to the village of Dakshineswar to the north of Calcutta. She got that prohibitory instruction when she was passing the night there in the boat.

1. We heard from Hriday, the Master's nephew, the description mentioned above, of Ramkumar's coming to Dakshineswar, but Ramlal, the Master's elder brother's son, gives a different account. He says, "Ramdhan Ghosh of the village of Desra, near Kamarpukur, was an officer of Rani Rasmani. The Rani held him in high regard for his efficiency and he gradually rose to be her secretary. As he was known to Ramkumar, he sent him a letter of invitation to come to take his farewell gifts at the time of the consecration ceremony of the Kali temple." Ramkumar came to the Janbazar house of the Rani and said to Ramdhan, "The Rani is a Kaivarta by birth. We are Brahmins belonging to the Rarhi class. We shall be boycotted if we accept her invitation to take gifts." Ramdhan showed him a list and said, "Why? Just see how many Brahmins of that class have been invited. They will all come and accept gifts from the Rani." Ramkumar agreed to accept gifts and came to Dakshineswar with the Master the day before the consecration. There flowed a current of bliss in the temple on that day on account of the performance of Yatra, the singing of the glory of Kali, the reading of the *Bhagavata* and of the *Ramayana,* and so on. There was no cessation of that current of bliss even during the night. Every nook and corner of the temple was as bright as day on account of innumerable lights. The Master used to say, "Going round the temple, one felt that the Rani had brought the silver mountain and placed it there." Ramkumar came to the Kali temple to see the festival the day before the installation.

It is inferred from what Ramlal said, that Ramkumar came to Dakshineswar and accepted the office of the priest at the request of both Ramdhan and Mahesh.

1. The old people of these villages bear testimony to this fact even now.

1. There is still the custom in villages of people depending on Providence when there is no possibility of a decision being arrived at by reasoning on a particular matter, and taking recourse to Dharmapatra, the leaf of impartiality, to know the will of Providence. When they ascertain it thus, they act accordingly, without further argument or reasoning. The leaf of impartiality is made use of in the following manner:

"Yes" and "No" are written on some fragments of paper or on Vilva leaves, which are put into an empty water-pot and a child is asked to pick up one fragment or a leaf. If the child picks up a "Yes" fragment, the person who has recourse to this expedient knows that Providence sanctions the contemplated course. If the other piece is picked up, he takes it that the will of Providence forbids the course. The division of property and other things also is sometimes made with the help of this device. Take this for example: Four brothers have been living in a joint family; they want to live separately now and divide the joint property, but cannot come to any decision as to the particular portion to be owned by each. They then ask a few important people of the village to give a decision. They divide the whole property, both movable and immovable into four equal parts as far as possible. Then they decide by means of the impartial leaf which particular portion is to go to a particular brother. Almost the same practice is followed here also. The names of the owners of the property are written on small pieces of paper. They are folded so that no one can read the names and then put into an empty water-pot. Each portion of the property divided into four parts is marked A, B, etc., and small pieces of paper similarly marked are placed, as before, in another pot. Two children are then called and one of them is asked to pick up one piece from one pot, and the other child, to pick up one from the other. The fragments of paper are then read and each brother is to accept the portion corresponding to his name.

CHAPTER V
ASSUMPTION OF THE OFFICE OF THE PRIEST

1. The behaviour and the resolve of Mathur since he saw the Master for the first time

The pleasant looks of the Master, his tender nature, devoutness and youth attracted the notice of Mathur Babu, the son-in-law of Rani Rasmani, a few weeks after the consecration of the temple. It is seen that the attraction of love is suddenly felt in the human heart, at first sight, for those with whom an intimate relationship is to be established for life. The scriptures say that this arises from the impressions of the relationship we had had in previous lives. When we see later the relationship of profound love between the Master and Mathur, we are led to conclude that there arose an indefinable attraction in the mind of Mathur at that time.

The Master lived at Dakshineswar for a month after the temple was consecrated, in a state of inability to ascertain what he should do. In the meantime Mathur resolved to appoint him to dress up the goddess, and discussed the matter with Ramkumar. Ramkumar told him the whole story about the mental condition of his brother, and discouraged Mathur in his effort to carry out his plan. But Mathur was not a man to be easily deterred. Although his offer was thus discouraged, he was seeking an opportunity to carry out his resolve.

2. Hriday, the nephew of the Master

Another person intimately connected with the Master's life came to Dakshineswar at that time. Hridayram Mukhopadhyaya, the son of

Hemangini Devi, the Master's cousin, came to Burdwan at that time in search of employment. He was then sixteen. He was staying with his acquaintances, his fellow-villagers there, but could find no way to the accomplishment of his purpose. When he came to know that his maternal uncles were living in the new temple of Rani Rasmani and were held in great respect, he thought that there was every chance of his purpose being fulfilled if he could go there. So Hriday came to Dakshineswar temple without delay and began to spend his time joyfully there in the company of Sri Ramakrishna, his uncle, of nearly his own age, who was familiar with him from his childhood.

Hriday was tall, handsome and of a manly build. His physique was firm and strong, and his mind extremely active and free from fear. He could undergo hard labour and adapt himself easily to circumstances. When in adverse circumstances, he could surmount them by inventing extraordinary means. Moreover, he truly and tenderly loved his youngest uncle and spared no pains to make him happy even by undergoing endless bodily troubles.

Always active, Hriday had not a bit of contemplativeness in him. Therefore, Hriday's mind, like those of all worldly people, could never be free from selfish urges. The more we discuss his relationship with the Master since the earliest days, the more shall we see that the little contemplativeness and selfless effort seen in his life, were all due to the constant company of the Master, who was an epitome of contemplativeness and whom he tried to imitate sometimes in this respect. The help of a man of action, courageous, reverential, and averse to free thinking, was very necessary for the success of the contemplative life of one who was indifferent to eating, drinking, and all other bodily efforts, and was ever thoughtful and altogether devoid of selfishness. Was this the reason why the divine Mother bound up a person like Hriday in a profound relationship with the Master at the time of his Sadhana? Who will answer? But it is true that, but for Hriday, it would have been impossible for him to keep body and soul together during that period. Therefore his name remains eternally connected with the life of Sri Ramakrishna; and he deserves our heart-felt devotion, reverence and obeisance for ever.

3. The Master at the time of Hriday's arrival

The Master was twenty years and a few months old when Hriday came to Dakshineswar. We can easily infer that his life now became easy to some extent when he got a companion in Hriday. Whatever he did from now on, bathing, walking, lying, sitting, etc., he did with his help. The doings of Sri Ramakrishna, who was always of the nature of a boy, appeared purposeless to the eyes of ordinary people; but Hriday, far from protesting against them, approved them heartily and sympathized with them; this endeared him much to the Master.

4. Hriday's love for the Master

Hriday himself said to us: "Many a time I felt an indescribable attraction towards the Master since then and always remained with him like his shadow. Even a minute's separation from him was painful to me. I bathed with him, walked with him, sat with him and lay down with him. We had to part for some time only at the time of taking our midday meals, for the Master took from the temple stores uncooked provisions which he cooked with his own hands. He took his food under the Panchavati and I had Prasada in the temple. But I made all preparations for his cooking before I parted. His principle regarding food was so strict then that he felt no peace of mind although he took food cooked by himself. He cooked his midday meal of rice etc., himself, but like us, he took the Luchi offered at night to the Mother of the universe. I noticed on many occasions that his eyes became filled with tears when he took Luchi and heard him say sorrowfully to the divine Mother, 'Mother! Thou hast made me take food from a Kaivarta.' "

The Master himself also sometimes spoke to us about the events of that time: "I felt extremely afflicted to think that I should have to take food from a Kaivarta. Even many of the poor indigent people did not come to the Kali temple of Rasmani to take their food, for that reason. As many people could not be procured to take the cooked food offered to the deity, cows were fed with it and the rest had to be thrown into the river." But we heard both from him and Hriday that he had not to take food cooked by himself for long. Our impression is that he did so till he took charge as a priest of the Kali

temple, which he did in two or three months after the consecration of the temple.

5. Hriday could not understand certain actions of the Master

Hriday knew that the Master loved him dearly. There was one thing only regarding him which Hriday could by no means understand. It was this: when he went to assist his elder uncle Ramkumar or for a little rest after his midday meal or to witness the evening service in the temple, the Master eluded him and disappeared for sometime, he did not know where. He could not find him out in spite of a great deal of searching. Asked about it on his return after about a couple of hours, he did not give a clear reply but said, "I was just near about this place." At such times on some days, when Hriday went in search of him and found him returning from the direction of the Panchavati, he thought that he had gone there perhaps to answer calls of nature and did not ask him anything.

6. Mathur praised the image of Siva made by the Master

This is what Hriday said. Once at that time the Master had a mind to make an image of Siva and worship Him in it. We have already said that sometimes he did this in his childhood at Kamarpukur. As soon as there arose that desire in his mind he took some earth from the bed of the river, made with his own hands an image of Siva, together with the bull, the tabor and trident, and began to worship Him in the image. Mathur happened to come there in the course of a stroll, and eager to learn which god the Master was worshipping intently, approached and saw that image. Though not big, the image was beautiful. Mathur was delighted to see it. No sooner had he seen it than he felt that images so expressive of divine nature were not available in the market. He then asked Hriday out of curiosity, "Where have you got this image from? Who has made it?" He was astonished to know from Hriday that the Master knew how to make images of deities and to set broken parts of images. He requested that the image might be given him after the worship. Hriday agreed and, with the permission of the Master, took the image when the worship was over and gave it to Mathur. When

Mathur got the image, he looked at it very minutely and, being charmed with it, sent it on to the Rani to have a look at it. The Rani too highly praised the maker and expressed surprise like Mathur when she knew that the Master had made it.[1] A short time previously Mathur had a desire to appoint the Master to do the temple duties. That desire became stronger now when he became acquainted with this new accomplishment of the Master. The Master had already heard from his brother of that intention of Mathur, but did not give ear to it as there was firmly fixed in his mind from childhood the idea that he "would not serve anyone but God".

7. The Master's opinion on service

We heard the Master express on many occasions that opinion about taking service. The Master did not hold in high regard anybody who served another without being hard pressed by need. Once, when he knew that one[2] of his boy devotees took service, he felt much pained; and was heard to say, "I feel more pained to hear that he has taken service than if I had heard of his death." When the Master met him later and knew that he had taken service for the maintenance of his helpless old mother, he said, passing his hand affectionately over his head and body, "There is no harm in that; you are not to blame when you have taken service for that purpose; but had you done so prompted by selfishness and needlessly, not for the sake of your mother, I could not have touched you any more. So I say, my Niranjan has not the slightest 'anjan' (stain) in him; why should he be so low?"

All the new-comers were surprised to hear those words of the Master to Nitya-niranjan, for that was his full name, and one was cheeky enough to say, "Sir, you condemn service; but how can we maintain our families without taking to it?" The Master replied, "Let him take service who likes it; I don't forbid all to do that. I say this only to them (pointing to Niranjan and the other boy devotees). Their case is different." The Master was fashioning the lives of his boy devotees in a different manner; and he, it goes without saying, gave such advice, because taking service was not consistent with the requisite spiritual attitude.

8. The Master felt hesitant to go to Mathur, lest he should ask him to take service

When the Master knew of the intention of Mathur Babu from his brother, he tried to remain as far as possible out of his sight and avoid him, for just as he was no respecter of persons in his observance of truth and religion with his body, mind, and speech, so he always felt unwilling to pain anyone by displaying his disregard, if there were no strong reason for it. Again, it was in the Master's nature to esteem the merits of a person of good qualities and honour a respectable man in a simple natural way, without any expectation of favours. If Mathur requested him persistently to accept the office of the priest in the temple, before he had himself arrived at a conclusion about it, he would have to refuse it and thus pain him. We clearly see that this apprehension was at the root of this action of the Master. Besides, he was then a young man of no importance and Mathur, the Rani's right-hand man, was a very important person. Under the circumstances it would not look well and would be regarded as boyish wantonness on his part to refuse Mathur's offer. But the more the time passed, the more pleasant did it seem to him to live at the Dakshineswar Kali temple. This mood of his was not concealed from himself, possessed as he was of inward insight. From a series of events that took place during this time, it is clear to us that he had no objection now to live at Dakshineswar, if he were allowed to live there without accepting the responsibility of any weighty duty and that his mind was not anxious now to return to his birth-place, Kamarpukur.

9. The Master accepted the office of the priest

What the Master apprehended came to pass one day. Mathur Babu came to the temple to pay his obeisance, saw the Master at a distance and sent for him. The Master was walking with Hriday and, seeing Mathur at a distance, was moving away from there, when Mathur's servant came and said to him, "Babu wants you." Hriday saw the Master reluctant to go to Mathur and asked him the reason. He said, "As soon as I go there, he will ask me to remain here and take service." Hriday said, "What is the harm in that? It is only good to be appointed to work under a great man in such a place. Why

are you then reluctant?" The Master replied, "I have no mind to be tied down to service for life. Besides, if I agree to perform the worship here, I must be responsible for the ornaments on the person of the goddess; that is a difficult task; it will not be possible for me; but if you take that responsibility and stay here, I have no objection to perform the worship."

It was really in search of employment that Hriday had come there. Therefore he gladly agreed to what the Master said. The Master then went to Mathur and, requested by him to take service in the temple, expressed his conditional assent. Mathur agreed. He appointed the Master to dress the image in the Kali temple from that day and asked Hriday to assist him and Ramkumar. Ramkumar became free from anxiety to a great extent to see his brother agreeing to do that duty at the request of Mathur.

10. The image of Govinda broke

All the events mentioned before came to pass within three months after the temple was consecrated. It was the end of A.D. 1855. The ceremonies in connection with "The Eighth Lunar Day", the birthday of Sri Krishna, had been properly performed without let or hindrance in the temple the day before. That was the day of the Nanda festival. The special midday-worship of, and the offering of food etc. to, Radha-Govinda were over. The priest, Kshetranath took Radharani to another room and put Her to bed there. He came back and, while taking Govinda, fell down, when one leg of the image broke. There arose a great commotion in the temple over that event. Opinions of various Pandits were taken, before the broken leg of the image was set and the worship of the image was continued[1] according to the Master's advice. Having seen the Master sometimes enter into ecstasy, Mathur became eager to seek his advice regarding the substitution of the broken image. Hriday stated that the Master was in an ecstatic mood before advising Mathur and said at the end of the ecstasy that substitution was not necessary. It was not unknown to Mathur that the Master could beautifully set broken parts of images. He, therefore, had to set the leg of the image now at Mathur's request. He did it so well that even now it cannot be known that the image ever got broken, even if one examines it very minutely.

After the image was broken, many people said many things about the fruitless worship of an image destitute of a limb; but Rani Rasmani and Mathur Babu had firm faith in the reasonable advice of the Master and did not give ear to those talks. Anyhow, the priest Kshetranath was dismissed from service for carelessness and the Master was placed in charge of the worship of Radha-Govinda since then. Hriday assisted Ramkumar in dressing the image of the Mother Kali at the time of Her worship.

11. The Master's words to Jaynarayan about the worship of a broken image

Hriday mentioned to us another fact about the broken image on another occasion. There is the Ghat belonging to Ratan Roy; the well-known landlord of Naral, near Kutighat at Baranagar, a few miles north of Calcutta. There is a temple near that Ghat. The images of the ten Mahavidyas are installed there. Formerly there had been good arrangement for worship, offerings, etc., in that temple, but at the time we are speaking of, it was in a decaying condition. Some time after, when Mathur had come to have much devotion to, and reverence for, the Master, they both once went to see the temple. Finding the temple in straitened circumstances, the Master asked Mathur to make an arrangement for a monthly supply of two maunds of rice and a sum of two rupees, to which he readily agreed. One day, while returning after paying one of his occasional visits to the temple, the Master saw Jayanarayan Bandyopadhyaya, the well-known landlord of the place, standing with many people in the Ghat consecrated by himself. As he was known to Jayanarayan, he went to meet him. Jayanarayan saluted and welcomed him respectfully and introduced him to his companions. In the course of the conversation he raised the topic of the Kali temple of Rani-Rasmani and asked the Master, "Sir, is Govinda of that temple broken?" The Master said to him, "Ah, what a fine understanding! Can One, who is an indivisible whole, be broken?" Finding the possibility of various vain topics being raised on the question put by Jayanarayan the Master then changed the course of the talk. Introducing another topic, he advised him to give up unessential parts of everything and accept the essentials only. The

intelligent Jayanarayan also took the hint from the Master and refrained from putting such vain questions.

12. The Master's musical talents

We have heard from Hriday that the worship by the Master was an act worth witnessing. Whosoever saw it became charmed. Oh, the songs sung by the Master in his sweet voice with his heart swelling with emotions! Whoever heard those songs could never forget them. There was in them nothing of the artificiality of the so-called masters of high class music. Their only merits were the complete identification of himself with the emotion of the songs, an accurate expression of the same in a sweet voice touching the heart, and the correctness of time and cadence. Whoever heard his songs became convinced that emotion was the very life of music. Again, it was very clear to any one who heard the songs sung by the Master and compared them with those sung by others, that the emotion conveyed by songs was thwarted in the case of others, because time and cadence were not accurate. Whenever Rani Rasmani came to Dakshineswar, she sent for him and listened to his songs. She was particularly fond of the following song:

"What is Thy consideration, O Mother, that Thou standest with Thy foot on Hara's bosom? Thou hast reached out Thy tongue of Thine own accord, as if Thou wert a very simple girl. I have understood it, O Saviour; is it Thy hereditary trait? Did Thy mother stand on Thy father's bosom like this?"

There was another reason why the Master's songs were so sweet. He became so much absorbed in the emotion of the song at the time of singing it that he forgot altogether that he was singing it to please anyone. We have not seen in our life anyone else singing a song and becoming so absorbed in the emotion as to lose himself completely like the Master. Even devotional singers expect a little at least of praise from their hearers. But it was in the case of the Master alone we saw that whenever anyone praised his songs, he actually felt that the praise was due to the emotion of the song and not at all to himself.

13. The Master's first vision during worship

Hriday used to say that while singing, the Master let fall copious tears. He became so much absorbed in worship that he could not know at all if anyone came or spoke near him. The Master said that at the time of performing Anganyasa, Karanyasa,[1] etc., he actually saw the letters of the Mantras in bright colours set in his body. He actually saw the Coiled Power going up in the form of a snake through the Sushumna to the Sahasrara.[2] He felt that the parts of his body left behind by that power, at once became still and insensitive and dead to all appearance. Again, when according to the prescribed method of worship, he uttered the Mantra "Rang",[3] sprinkled water all round himself and imagined a wall of fire existing around the place of worship, he actually saw an impassable wall of fire with hundreds of tongues spread out, protecting the place of worship from all obstacles. Hriday said that other Brahmins, seeing his mind quite absorbed and body shining all over with a resplendent lustre, said to one another, "It is as if Vishnu Himself has assumed a human body and has sat down to worship."

14. Ramkumar taught the Master how to become adroit in worship, recital of scriptures, etc.

Ramkumar, the devotee of the goddess, became, to a great extent, free from anxiety about the maintenance of his relatives after he came to Dakshineswar. But he felt from time to time perturbed over another matter, for he noticed in his young brother a fondness for solitude and a queer mood of indifference to worldly affairs. He found in him a complete lack of interest in everything. Ramkumar at first thought that the boy was perhaps anxious to return to his mother at Kamarpukur and was always thinking of her. He saw the boy sitting quiet under the Panchavati or taking strolls on the bank of the Ganga away from the temple at all times, morning and evening. Or he saw him spending long hours in the jungle that existed all round the Panchavati in those days and then coming out of it. Time passed but the boy expressed no desire to return home. Ramkumar sometimes asked him about it and knew that he felt no such desire. He thereupon gave up the idea of sending him home. He thought, "I am advanced in age and am daily becoming infirm. Who knows when my lease of life will come to an end?" Under the circumstances time should not, he thought, be wasted

any more. Before he passed away, it was his absolute duty to bring up the boy so that he might be able to stand on his own legs, earn a decent living and manage his worldly affairs. Therefore, Ramkumar was much pleased, when Mathur consulted him about appointing the boy to do the duties of the temple. He became free from anxiety to a great extent when, after a lapse of time, at the request of Mathur the boy accepted at first the duty of dressing up the image and afterwards that of officiating as priest, and performed those duties with ability. He now began teaching him the complete reading of the *Chandi* and the mode of worship of the Mother. He thought that this would make his brother an adept in conducting worship, and there would be no difficulty in the worship and service of the divine Mother if he could not on any occasion perform them. The Master soon learnt them and, knowing that it is not proper to worship the goddess without being initiated in her Mantra, he resolved to be initiated in it.

15. The Master was initiated in the Sakti Mantra by Kenaram Bhattacharya

A proficient Sadhaka of Sakti named Kenaram Bhattacharya used, then, to live at Baithakkhana bazaar in Calcutta. He used to frequent the temple of Rani Rasmani at Dakshineswar, and it seems, he was acquainted with Mathur and all other members of the Rani's family. We were told by Hriday that those who knew him paid him great respect as a devout Sadhaka. He had been acquainted with the Master's brother Ramkumar for some time past. The Master resolved to be initiated by him. We are told that as soon as he was initiated, the Master entered into ecstasy. Kenaram became charmed to see his uncommon devotion and blessed him heartily so that he might realize his chosen Ideal.

16. Ramkumar's death

Ramkumar himself generally performed the service of Radha-Govinda at that time and employed the Master to worship the Mother Kali, either because he became unable to do so at times or because he wanted to let the Master get accustomed to the conduct of the worship. Mathur came to know

of it in a short time and, with the permission of the Rani, requested Ramkumar permanently to perform the worship in the Vishnu temple thenceforward. So, the Master was now appointed to the office of the priest, and Hriday to dress the image, in the Kali temple. The reason why the arrangement of the worship was changed seems to be that Mathur thought that Ramkumar had become old and infirm and it was beyond his power to carry on the more difficult duties of the Kali temple. Ramkumar was glad to see that arrangement made and standing beside his brother in the Kali temple taught him how to perform properly that worship and service. He thus became free from anxiety. Shortly afterwards, he spoke to Mathur and had Hriday appointed to worship Radha-Govinda. He was now preparing to go home on leave for some time. But Ramkumar was never to go home again. He went on some business to a place called Syamnagar Mulajor, to the north of Calcutta, for a few days and suddenly died there. Ramkumar lived and worshipped the divine Mother for one year only after the temple of Rani Rasmani was consecrated; so, probably he passed away in the middle of A.D. 1856.

Footnote

1. Some say that this event happened at the time when the Master assumed the office of the priest and that Mathur showed it to the Rani saying, “The goddess will soon become ‘awakened’ as we have got such a competent priest.”

2. Swami Niranjanananda.

1. For a detailed account of this event see III. 6

1. *Vide* Glossary.

2. *Vide* III. 2.

3. Actual name of fire, or the sound produced by its Sakti, heard by Yogins. —Tr,

CHAPTER VI
SPIRITUAL EAGERNESS AND THE FIRST VISION

1. The Master's behaviour at this time

The Master was very young when his father died. He was therefore brought up from his childhood under the affectionate care of his mother Chandradevi and his eldest brother Ram kumar. Ramkumar was about thirty-one years older than the Master. Therefore he received a part of the Master's devotion which was due to a father. It is certain that the Master was very much grieved at the sudden death of his brother who was as affectionate to him as a father. The renunciation of the world on the part of Lord Buddha, an incarnation of God, at the sight of illness, old age and death is well known. Who will say how far his brother's death contributed to the kindling up of the fire of renunciation in the Master's pure mind, by producing in him a firm conviction of the transitoriness of the world? Be that as it may, he applied his mind more closely to the worship of the Mother of the universe from this time on and became anxious to know whether man thirsting for Her vision became really blessed with it. We are told that at this time he used to spend his days sitting with the divine Mother in the temple at the end of the worship and becoming absorbed in Her. He became overwhelmed with, and lost himself in, the love for the Mother while he was singing for Her the songs composed by devotees like Ramprasad and Kamalakanta. He was extremely reluctant to waste a single moment in vain talk now. And when the door of the temple was closed at midday or at night, he left all company, entered the jungle round the Panchavati and spent his time in the thought and meditation of the Mother of the universe.

2. Hriday's anxiety at this and his resolve

These actions of the Master were not agreeable to Hriday. But what could he do? It was not unknown to him that from his childhood the Master accomplished whatever he wanted to accomplish and nobody could prevent him. It was therefore of no avail to protest to him or hinder him. But Hriday could not help hinting to him his anxiety when he saw that mood growing with alarming rapidity every day. Hriday became very anxious on knowing that, instead of sleeping, he left his bed and went somewhere at night, for he would have to stand the hard labour of the divine service in the temple. Besides, the Master did not take now as much food as he once used to take. It was probable that under the circumstances, his health might break down if he did not sleep at night. So Hriday resolved to inquire about it and set things right as far as it lay in his power.

3. The condition of the Panchavati and the place around it at that time

The land surrounding the Panchavati was not even then as it is now. It was full of pits, ditches, low lands, jungles, etc. There grew an Amalaki tree among the wild trees and plants. It was a burial ground besides being a jungle. Therefore people hardly went there even in the daytime. If they went that way at all, they never entered the jungle. So, going there at night was out of the question. No one ventured there for fear of ghosts. We have heard from Hriday that the tree grew on a low piece of land. So, anyone sitting under that tree could not be seen from the high land outside the jungle. The Master used to sit under it for meditation at night.

4. Hriday asked, "What do you do in the jungle at night?"

One night, when the Master started for that place, Hriday followed him without his knowledge and saw him enter that jungle. He did not go farther lest the Master should be annoyed. But in order to frighten him he threw stones and some gravel so that they fell round about him for some time. Seeing that this did not bring the Master back, he could not do anything but return to his room. He asked the Master during his leisure the next day, "What do you do when you enter the jungle at night?" "There is," replied

the Master, “an Amalaki tree there. I sit under it and practise meditation. The scriptures say that anyone who meditates under an Amalaki tree, with whatever desire in his mind, gets it fulfilled.”

5. Hriday tried to frighten the Master

As soon as the Master sat for meditation under that tree after that event, there happened from time to time various kinds of disturbances like stone-throwing, for a few days. Although he knew that it was all Hriday’s doing, the Master never mentioned it to him. But Hriday could not feel at ease when he found that he could not dissuade him by that means. One day he entered the jungle with a silent step shortly after the Master had gone to the tree and saw from a distance that he had put off his cloth and the sacred thread and was sitting at ease in meditation. When he saw this, he thought, “Has uncle gone mad? It is only mad people that would do so. If he wants to meditate, let him do it by all means; but why does he throw off the only cloth he has on?”

6. The Master said to Hriday “One must become free from all the bondages before one meditates”

Thinking so, he immediately approached him and said, “What is this? How is it that you have put off your thread and cloth and are stark naked?” When thus shouted at a few times, the Master gained his normal consciousness and heard Hriday put those questions to him. He said, “What do you know? Thus freed from all ties, one should practise meditation. From his birth man labours under ‘eight bondages’,[1] of hatred, fear, shame, aversion, egoism, vanity, pride of noble descent, and obsession with formal good conduct. The sacred thread also is a ‘bondage’, for it is a sign of the egoism, ‘I am a Brahmin and superior to all.’ When one calls on Mother, one should discard these ‘bondages’ and call on Her with a concentrated mind. That is why I have put off these. I shall put them on again when I return at the end of meditation.” Hriday was aghast to hear these words which he had never heard before and unable to say anything in reply, left that place. A little while previously he had thought that he would convince

his uncle of his mistake in various ways and scold him, but what he actually did was nothing of the kind.

7. The Master practised with both his body and mind (1) how to destroy egoism due to birth, (2) how to regard alike a clod of earth, a precious stone and gold, and (3) how to have the knowledge that Siva is in all Jivas

It is good to state one fact here in connection with the event mentioned above, for if that is known, we shall be able to understand many of the events that followed in the Master's life. The Master could not, we saw, rest assured that by discarding the eight bondages only mentally, he could be freed from them; he renounced them physically also as far as possible. We see him behaving similarly with regard to all other matters in later life. Take for example the following facts:

In order to destroy vanity born of noble descent and thereby acquire true humility, he cleaned very carefully with his hands the place which is absolutely shunned as unclean by others.

If the human mind could not regard alike a clod of earth, a stone and gold, that is, if it could not regard metals like gold and precious stones to be as worthless as a clod of earth, it could not, he was told, free itself from the desire of enjoying bodily pleasures, completely turn towards God and fix itself in Yoga. As soon as he heard this, the Master took in his hand a few coins and clods of earth and threw them into the Ganga, repeating over and over again, "rupee—earth, earth—rupee".

In order to make firm his knowledge that Siva (God) is in all Jivas (creatures), he ate and put on his head, as Prasada, a little of the leavings from the leaf-plates of the poor people after they had been fed at the Kali temple. Afterwards, he carried those leaves on his head to the bank of the Ganga, took a broom and swept and washed the place clean with his own hands. He felt happy to think that a little of the service of God had been performed with the help of that mortal body of his.

8. The sequence of the Master's renunciation

Many similar events may be mentioned. It is seen in all these cases that he did not rest satisfied with mere mental renouncing of the obstacles on the path to the realization of God, but discarded them at first in their gross forms also. In other words, he kept his body and senses away from them as far as possible, and compelled them forcibly to act contrary to their natural inclinations. It is seen that acting thus his mind had all its past impressions destroyed completely and it grasped the new contrary ones so firmly that it could not act against them. He did not admit that new ideas had properly been grasped and contrary ones given up, till at least a little of the former had been converted into practice with the help of the body and the senses.

9. An objection that this method of Sadhana is a fancied one, and its refutation

Wholly averse to giving up past impressions, we think that there was no need of such actions on the part of the Master. In the course of discussing such actions of his, some have that this method gone to the length of saying, "His actions such as cleaning dirty abominable places, throwing into the Ganga the coins and the clods of earth repeating 'rupee—earth, earth—rupee', seem to be whims of his fancy. The mental development that he obtained through those extraordinary means could be obtained more quickly through far easier ones." In reply we have to say: It all sounds very well. But how many people up till now have been able to become completely averse to sights, tastes and other worldly objects and have devoted their whole minds to God by adopting your so-called easier means of mentally giving up sensuous objects, without having recourse to external practices? It can never be. One cannot succeed in any great undertaking, let alone the realization of God, when one's mind has one idea and moves in a particular direction while the body acts contrary to that idea and moves in a different direction. But, eagerly longing for the enjoyments of sight, taste, etc., man does not realize the truth of this statement. Under the control of past impressions, he does not try to give up with his body and senses any of their objects, even when he realizes that it is good to renounce it, but goes on thinking, "Let the body do as it will, but let the mind soar high." Eager to have Yoga and Bhoga simultaneously, he deceives himself, for, like light

and darkness, these two things can never coexist. No one has so far been able to discover an easy method in the spiritual world through which God and the world of lust and gold, can be served at the same time.[1] Therefore the scriptures repeatedly teach us, “Whatever ought to be given up, has to be given up with body, mind and speech, and whatever ought to be accepted, has to be accepted similarly. Then and then only will the aspirant be fit to realize God.” That is why the sages say, “Man can never have the realization of the Self with the help of knowledge, unaided by practice and without putting on emblems,[2] which give rise to spiritual attitudes.” It is also reasonable to believe that the human mind reaches the subtle state from the gross, and the causal from the subtle. “There is no other path to the realization of the supreme goal.”[3]

10. The manner in which the Master performed worship etc., at this time

We have said before that the Master applied his mind more closely, to the worship of the divine Mother after the death of his eldest brother. With faith in his heart he was now eagerly doing whatever he knew to be favourable to the attainment of Her vision. We were told by the Master himself that he regarded as an auxiliary to his daily worship the singing for the goddess of the songs composed by perfected devotees like Ramprasad. His mind was filled with zeal when he sang those songs with his heart full of profound spiritual emotion. He thought, “Devotees like Ramprasad had the vision of the Mother. So it is certain that the Mother of the universe is realizable; why can I not then be blessed with Her vision?” He used to say with an eager heart, “Thou showed Thyself to Ramprasad, Mother, why then shouldst Thou not reveal Thyself to me? I don’t want wealth, friends, relatives, enjoyment of pleasure, and the like. Do show Thyself to me.” He would pray and cry this way, while his bosom was flooded with streams of tears from his eyes, and the heaviness of his heart lessened a little. Urged by a fond hope, he would be somewhat reassured like a child and become ready to please the goddess by singing for Her again. He thus went on spending his days in worship, meditation, and the singing of devotional songs. His love and longing for Her increased daily.

Thus the wonderful worshipper's scheduled period of time for performing the worship and service of the goddess went on increasing day by day. He sat for worship and, placing a flower on his head according to scriptural injunction, perhaps remained motionless like the trunk of a tree meditating for two long hours. After offering cooked food and other things to the Mother, he perhaps spent a long time thinking that She was taking them. Again, perhaps he spent a long time every morning in decorating the Goddess with garlands made of flowers plucked with his own hands. Or he remained engaged for a very long time in performing the evening Arati with a heart filled with loving devotion. Again, singing for the Mother of the universe in the afternoon, or at the end of the Arati, he sometimes became so much absorbed in and overwhelmed with spiritual emotions, that he could be made to perform the Arati or the evening services of food offering, etc., only when he had been reminded again and again that it was getting late for those services. The worship continued thus for a time.

11. What Mathur and others thought of the Master's worship and other actions at this time

It is clear that the attention of the people of the temple was drawn towards the Master when they saw such devotion, eagerness and spiritual steadfastness on his part. People at first deride and ridicule a person who is seen to give up the path generally followed by them and conducts himself or does something, in a novel way. But with the passage of time and as the person goes firmly forward on his path, their attitude changes and reverence takes its place. The Master's case was no exception to this rule. Scarcely had he performed the worship this way for some time, when he became the object of many people's derision. Sometime later some people began to revere him. It is said that Mathur saw the Master's worship etc., at this time and said with delight to Rani Rasmani, "We have got an extraordinary worshipper; the Goddess will be awakened very soon." The Master never deviated from his own course on account of the opinions of the people. Like a river flowing to the sea, his mind was from now on progressing incessantly towards the holy feet of the divine Mother of the universe.

12. The changes that appeared in the Master's personality on account of his increasing love of God

As days went by, the devotion and eagerness of the Master increased more and more. And the course of his mind pointing incessantly in one direction began to manifest itself in various symptoms in his body. The amount of his food and sleep decreased. As the blood in his body was always moving speedily to his chest and brain, his chest appeared constantly reddish and his eyes became sometimes suddenly filled with tears. He felt a great eagerness for the realization of the Divine, and there existed in his mind an incessant anxiety, as to what he should do and how he could have Her vision. Therefore there was seen in his body a state of restlessness and a lack of tranquillity at all times other than those of meditation, worship, etc.

We were told by the Master himself, that one day at that time, he was singing for the divine Mother and very eagerly prayed and wept to have Her vision. He prayed to Her saying, "Dost Thou not, O Mother, hear even a little of so many prayers I say to Thee? Thou didst show Thyself to Ramprasad. Why shouldst Thou not then reveal Thyself to me?"

13. The description of the Master's attainment of the first vision of the universal Mother. The Master's yearning at that time

He used to say, "There was then an intolerable anguish in my heart because I could not have Her vision. Just as a man wrings a towel forcibly to squeeze out all the water from it, I felt as if somebody caught hold of my heart and mind and was doing so with them. Greatly afflicted with the thought that I might never have Mother's vision, I was dying of despair. Being in an agony I thought that there was then no use in living this life. My eyes suddenly fell upon the sword that was there in the Mother's temple. I made up my mind to put an end to my life with it that very moment. Like one mad, I ran and caught hold of it, when suddenly I had the wonderful vision of the Mother, and fell down unconscious. I did not know what happened then in the external world—how that day and the next slipped away. But, in my heart of hearts, there was flowing a current of

intense bliss, never experienced before, and I had the immediate knowledge of the Light that was Mother."

On another occasion the Master described to us in detail his wonderful vision spoken of before. He said, "It was as if houses, doors, temples and all other things vanished altogether; as if there was nothing anywhere! And what I saw was a boundless infinite conscious sea of light! However far and in whatever direction I looked, I found a contiuous succession of effulgent waves coming forward, raging and storming from all sides with a great speed. Very soon they fell on me and made me sink to the unknown bottom. I panted, struggled, and fell unconscious." The Master told us that at the time of his first vision he saw a conscious sea of light. But what about the divine Mother's form consisting of pure consciousness only — the form of Hers with hands that give boons and freedom from fear? Did the Master then have the vision of that form also in that sea of light? It appears that he had, for as soon as he had the slightest consciousness at the time of his first vision, he, we are told, uttered repeatedly the word "Mother" in a plaintive voice.

When that vision came to an end, there arose in the heart of the Master an eager, incessant cry of lamentation for a constant immediate vision of the divine Mother's form, consisting of consciousness only. Although it was not always manifested in external symptoms like weeping, etc., it always existed in his heart. Sometimes it increased so much that, unable to suppress it, he fell on the ground and struggled in pain. He wept so much, saying, "Bestow Thy grace on me Mother, show Thyself to me," that people gathered all round him! Even a shade of a concern for what they would think of such restlessness did not arise in his mind at that time. He used to say, "Although people stood all round, they appeared unreal like shadows or pictures painted on canvas, and the slightest sense of shame or hesitation did not touch the mind on that account. But immediately after I lost consciousness on account of unbearable anguish, I saw that form of the Mother with hands that give boons and freedom from fear —the form that smiled, spoke and consoled and taught me in endless ways!"

Footnote

1. *Vide* Glossary.

1. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. The Holy Bible. Math. VI. 24.

2. *Tapasovapyalingat*.— *Mundaka Upanishad*, 3. 2. 4.

3. *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, 6. 15.

CHAPTER VII
SADHANA AND DIVINE INEBRIATION

1. The state after the first vision

The Master became quite unfit for all work for some days on account of the bliss arising from the vision of the Mother. It became impossible for him to perform regularly the worship and other duties of the temple. Hriday somehow managed them with the help of another Brahmin and applied his mind to arranging for some treatment for his uncle, thinking that he was afflicted with insanity. He had become somehow acquainted with a physician of the princely house of Bhukailas, under whose treatment he placed the Master now; and knowing that there was no possibility of a speedy recovery, he sent word to his mother and brother at Kamarpukur.

2. The Master's physical sensations and mental perceptions at this time. His visions

The Master proceeded to perform the worship on the days on which he did not become altogether restless or devoid of consciousness on account of the overwhelming eagerness for God-vision. He told us sometimes a little of the thoughts and experiences at the time of his worship and meditation in those days. He said, "I used to show to my mind the image of Bhairava in meditation on the parapet of the roof of the music-hall and say to it, 'You must be firm and motionless like it and meditate on Mother's Lotus Feet.' No sooner had I sat down for meditation than I heard clattering sounds produced in the joints of my body and limbs from the direction of the legs upwards; and they got locked one after another as if some one from within turned the keys. As long as I meditated, I had no power to move my body and change my posture even slightly or give up meditation and go

elsewhere or do anything else at will. I was, as it were, forcibly made to sit in the same posture, as long as the joints did not make clattering sounds as before and were unlocked, this time from the direction of the head to the legs. When I sat and meditated I had, in the beginning, the vision of particles of light like groups of fire-flies; I saw sometimes all quarters covered with masses of mist-like light; and at other times I perceived that all things were pervaded by bright waves of light like molten silver. I saw these things sometimes with my eyes shut and sometimes with my eyes open. I did not understand what I saw nor did I know whether it was good or bad to have such visions. I therefore prayed to Mother with a troubled heart, 'I don't understand, Mother, what is happening to me; I don't know Mantras etc., by which to call Thee; please teach me personally what may enable me to realize Thee. Mother, if Thou dost not teach me, who else will? For, there is no refuge for me except Thee.' I used to pray thus with a concentrated mind and weep piteously on account of the eagerness of my heart."

3. What changes were produced in all his actions and ideas by the first vision

The Master's worship, meditation, etc., underwent novel changes. It is difficult to explain to others that wonderful state of complete absorption in Her. There were in that state childlike sincerity, faith, dependence and sweetness only, with the divine Mother for their stay and support. The seriousness of an adult, the personal efforts for the observance of injunctions and prohibitions according to time, place and person, the conducting of oneself with forethought for conforming to both worldliness and godliness — none of these were to be seen in that attitude of his. Whenever one saw him, one thought that he had merged his little will and the little ego, in the will of Her who was the source of all wills, and did everything as if he was completely an instrument in Her hand, praying in his heart of hearts, "Mother, my only refuge, kindly make me, Thy boy, say and do what I should." As there arose, naturally under these circumstances, a great difference between the faith and actions of worldly people and his own conduct and behaviour, various people began to say various things, at

first in whispers and later in loud gossip. But all these mattered little to him, for the boy of the divine Mother was now moving and doing everything by Her direction. The vain clamour of the world did not reach his ears at all. Although in the world, he was not of it. The external world was now transformed for him into a dream world. Now he could not attribute reality to it in spite of efforts. The universal Mother's form, consisting of pure consciousness and bliss, was now known to him as the only reality.

4. The difference between the previous worship, vision, etc., of the Master and those of this time

Previously, on some occasions at the time of worship and meditation, the Master used to see a hand of the divine Mother or a foot, bright and delicate, or Her sweet, affectionate and smiling face, supremely beautiful. Now he saw, even at times other than those of worship and meditation, the full figure of the effulgent Mother, smiling and speaking, guiding and accompanying him and saying, "Do this, don't do that."

Formerly when he offered cooked food etc., to the Mother, he used to see an extraordinary ray of light coming out beaming from Her eyes, touching all the offered articles, taking their essential parts and withdrawing itself again into Her eyes. Now he saw that even before the offering was made, the same Mother in Her very person, sat down to take the offerings illumining the temple with the effulgence of Her holy presence. One day Hriday came suddenly at the time of the worship and saw that the Master had taken in his hands an Arghya consisting of china-roses and Vilva leaves, which he was going to offer at the lotus feet of the divine Mother. He was absorbed in thinking of Her, when he cried out suddenly saying, "Wait, wait. Let me utter the Mantra first; and then Thou mayst take it." He then offered the food ritually before finishing the worship.

Previously, at the time of worship and meditation, he saw that there appeared a wonderful living Presence in the stone image before him. Now he did not see that image at all when he entered the temple; but saw instead, standing there, the living Mother Herself, all consciousness, and with hands that offered boons and freedom from fear. The Master said, "I put the palm of my hand near Her nostrils and felt that Mother was actually breathing. I

observed very closely, but I could never see the shadow of the Mother's divine person on the temple wall in the light of the lamp at night. I heard from my room Mother, merry like a little girl, going upstairs, Her anklets making jingling sounds. I came out to verify and found that She, with Her hair dishevelled, was actually standing on the verandah of the first floor of the temple and was now viewing Calcutta, now the Ganga."

5. What Hriday said about the Master's worship, meditation, etc., at this time

"One now felt", said Hriday, "awe-struck when one entered the Kali temple even when the Master was not there, let alone when he was. Yet I could not give up the temptation of seeing how the Master behaved during the time of worship. What I saw, when I suddenly came there on many occasions, filled my heart with awe and devotion. But doubt arose when I came out. I thought, 'Has uncle really gone mad? Otherwise why does he do such forbidden acts at the time of worship?' I felt apprehensive about what the Rani and Mathur Babu would think and say when they came to know of it. But such thoughts never crossed uncle's mind, nor did he give ear to what I told him of them. Again, I could not venture now to speak to him much; an indescribable fear and hesitation came and pressed my mouth, I knew not why. I felt an indefinable distance between him and me for some unknown reason. Having no other alternative left, I served him silently as far as I could. But I felt apprehensive lest he should cause a scene some day."

Hriday gave us the following account of the Master's actions which, when he entered the temple suddenly at the time of worship, filled his heart at once with awe, fear and devotion. He said:

"I saw uncle prepare an Arghya consisting of china-roses and Vilva leaves, touch his head, his bosom, all his limbs, and even his own feet with it and at last offer it at the lotus feet of the Mother of the universe. ...

"I saw his bosom and eyes always reddish like those of a drunkard. Reeling in that condition, he left the worshipper's seat, and ascending the altar caressed the divine Mother by affectionately touching Her chin and

began singing, laughing, joking, and conversing with Her; or, sometimes, he caught hold of Her hands and danced. ...

"I saw that he, while offering cooked food etc., to the divine Mother, got up suddenly, took in his hand a morsel of rice and curry from the plate, touched the divine Mother's mouth with it and said, 'Mother, eat it, do eat it, Mother.' Afterwards perhaps he said, 'Dost Thou ask me to take it? Wilt Thou take it afterwards? Very well, I am taking it now.' Saying this, he took a part of it himself and putting the rest to Her mouth again, said, 'I have taken it. Thyself eat it now.' One day I found that at the time of the food-offering the Master saw a cat enter the temple mewing. He fed it with the food that was to be offered to the divine Mother saying, "Wilt Thou take it, Mother?' ...

"I saw him on some occasions at night put the Mother to bed and himself lie on Her silver bedstead for some time, saying, 'Dost Thou ask me to lie down? All right, I am doing so.' ...

"I saw again, that he sat to worship and became so much absorbed in meditation that he had not the slightest consciousness of the external world for a long time. ...

"Uncle rose from his bed very early in the morning and collected flowers in order to make garlands for Mother Kali. At that time too it seemed to me that there was some one there whom he caressed, and with whom he spoke, laughed, joked and made merry and played the importunate child. ...

"I saw further that uncle had not a wink of sleep at night. When ever I awoke, I found that, overwhelmed with spiritual emotions, he was speaking or singing; or sometimes went to the Panchavati and was merged in meditation."

6. A discussion by the Cashier and other officers, of the temple on the Master's love inspired worship. They sent word to Mathur Babu

Hriday used to say that, although he was apprehensive regarding the Master's behaviour, he could not express his apprehensions to anybody for purposes of consultation. For, that man might pass it on to the high officers of the temple and they might do harm to his uncle by poisoning the ears of

the proprietors. But how could things be suppressed when every day, nay, every moment, such queer events were taking place? Some worshippers who came to the Kali temple at the time of worship, saw everything with their own eyes and complained to the cashier and other officers. The latter heard it, came to the Kali temple and saw it all. But when they saw Sri Ramakrishna's excited, formidable visage, as of one possessed by a power, his unhesitating behaviour and his fearlessness and absent-mindedness, they shrank with an indefinable fear from mentioning anything to him or from forbidding him to do what he was doing. They consulted one another when they returned to the office of the temple. They concluded that the Bhattacharya had gone mad or was possessed by a ghost; no one could otherwise behave in such an unscriptural way at the time of worship; in any case, the worship, the food-offering and other services of the Goddess were, as a matter of fact, not being performed; the Bhattacharya had spoilt everything. They could not but send word to the proprietors.

Word was sent to Mathur at Janbazar. He wrote back in reply that he would personally observe things soon and do what was proper. He asked them to let the Bhattacharya perform worship and other services in his own way and not to obstruct him till he came. They received the letter from Mathur and were anxiously waiting for him to come. They were busy talking among themselves, "The Bhattacharya is sure to be dismissed this time; as soon as the Babu comes, he will expel him. Giving offence to the gods! How long will they put up with it?" and so on.

7. Mathur came to see the Master's worship. His impression of it

One day Mathur came suddenly at the time of worship, without any one's knowledge, entered the Kali temple and observed minutely the Master's actions for a long time. But being filled with spiritual emotions, the Master did not notice him at all. Every day he used to merge himself in the presence of the Mother at the time of worship, unconscious of the coming of any one. This state was the first thing that Mathur noticed on entering the temple. He could also discern when later he saw his importunate boyish requests to Her, that it was all born of his single-minded devotion to, and love of, the divine Mother. What else could, he thought, bring about the

realization of the Mother, if such sincere devotion could not? His heart became filled with an extraordinary bliss when he saw that streams of tears sometimes trickled down the Bhattacharya's eyes during worship, that he felt sometimes a sincere unbounded joy, and that he was at other times, motionless, destitute of consciousness of the external world and inattentive to surrounding objects. Mathur felt that the holy temple was actually filled with an intense manifestation of palpable divine presence. He had now the firm conviction that the Bhattacharya had really become blessed by having the grace of the universal Mother. With his eyes filled with tears and heart purified by devotion, he then saluted over and over again the divine Mother and Her extraordinary worshipper from a distance, saying, "The installation of the Devi has answered its purpose at long last. It may be said that the Devi has truly been installed now and the real worship of the Mother has been performed." He returned home without telling the officers anything. The next day the chief officer of the temple got from him the order: "Do not obstruct the Bhattacharya in his worship, in whatever manner he might perform it."[1]

8. The Master attained Ragatmika Bhakti through intense love of God—The result of that Bhakti

On hearing of the series of events mentioned above, the reader who is well versed in the scriptures, will easily understand that at this time there had come a great change in the Master's mind. It passed beyond the prescribed limit of the devotion enjoined by the scriptures and took a speedy course along the exalted path of pure devotional love. But this change came in such a simple natural way that even Sri Ramakrishna himself could not understand it clearly, let alone others. The only thing he understood was that, urged by his love for the divine Mother, he could not but behave that way, as if he was forced to do so. This is why we see him think sometimes, "What is happening to me? Am I on the right track?" He, therefore, eagerly said to the divine Mother, "I don't know and don't understand, Mother, what these things are that are happening to me; please make me do what I am to do, teach me what Thou wantest me to learn and reveal Thyself to me. Continue always to hold me by the hand." He made

his mind turn away from lust, gold, honour, fame, and all other powers and enjoyments of the world and said those words imploringly from the bottom of his heart to the divine Mother. The Mother of the universe, on Her part, held him by the hand, protected him under all circumstances and fulfilled his prayer. Unasked, She brought him, whenever necessary, all those things and all those persons that were required for the growth and perfection of his life as an aspirant and made him reach easily and naturally the ultimate goal of pure knowledge and pure devotion. The divine Lord has promised to His devotees through the Gita[1]: "To those of undivided minds who worship and always remain united with Me, and who place their whole minds in Me and do not think even of their food and movements necessary for life, I bring, even unasked, all the things they require." The more we study the life of the Master at this time, the more shall we be surprised and astounded to understand how literally that promise in the Gita was fulfilled in his life. It became necessary to prove clearly again the truth of that promise of the divine Lord in this selfish modern age, which has lust for sex and silver as its only motive. Although Sadhakas have been teaching men from age to age to "give up all to have all" that is, the Sadhaka will not suffer from the lack of anything if he renounces everything for the divine Lord, weak-minded men, entangled in worldly objects, could not believe in the promise without seeing it fulfilled in the modern age again. Therefore, the Mother of the universe enacted this wonderful play with the Master, who had a completely undivided mind, in order to show man the truth of that saying of the scripture. Listen to this, O man, with a pure heart and advance on the path of renunciation according to your capacity.

9. The body and the mind of incarnations only, the Master said, could contain the full onrush of Ragatmika Bhakti

The Master used to say that when the powerful flood of divine moods comes into human life unexpectedly, it cannot be suppressed or concealed by thousands of efforts. That is not all; the gross, inert body very often fails to contain that powerful onrush of divine emotion into the mind and is completely shattered. Many Sadhakas meet with death that way. A fit body is necessary to contain the abounding surge of emotions born of perfect

knowledge or perfect devotion. It is only the bodies of great souls known as incarnations of God that have uptill now been seen always to bear its full force and continue to live in the world. This is why the devotional scriptures describe them again and again as possessed of bodies consisting of pure Sattva. The incarnations, they say, can bear the full impulse of spiritual emotions, only because they come down to the world with bodies made of the element of pure Sattva, devoid of all contact with Rajas or Tamas. Even in spite of their having such bodies, they, particularly the incarnations treading the path of devotion, are seen, on many occasions, to be afflicted and overwhelmed with the powerful stress of divine moods. It is indubitable from the accounts we have received that the joints in the Bodies of Lord Jesus and Sri Chaitanya relaxed and drops of blood like perspiration oozed out through every pore in their bodies owing to the powerful surge of spiritual emotions. No doubt, these physical changes were felt to be extremely painful, yet it was only through them that their bodies got adapted to contain those extraordinary mental surgings. When afterwards the bearing of that impulse became easy and natural for their bodies, those changes also, it was noticed, were not always seen in them as before.

10. The physical changes in the Master due to the impulse of that devotion and consequent pain, such as, the burning sensation in his body, (1) when the Papa-purusha was burnt, (2) during his pang of separation after his first vision of the Mother, and (3) during the sadhana of the Madhura-Bhava

From now on, a series of extraordinary changes came over the Master's body because of the surge of the devotional love. We have already made mention of the burning changes sensation in his body from the beginning of his Sadhana. He had to suffer on many occasions from its excess. The Master himself pointed out its cause to us on various occasions. "At the time of performing Sandhya and worship," said the Master, "I used to think, according to scriptural prescription, that the Papapurusha within had been burnt up. Who knew then that there was actually a Papapurusha within the body and that it could be actually burnt and destroyed? A burning sensation came on the body from the beginning of the Sadhana. I thought, 'What is

this disease?' It increased by degrees and became unbearable. Various kinds of oils prescribed by physicians were used; but it could by no means be alleviated. One day, while I was sitting under the Panchavati, I saw that a jet-black person with red eyes and a hideous appearance came reeling, as if drunk, out of this (showing his own body) and walked before me. I saw again another person of placid mien, in ochre-coloured dress with a trident in his hand similarly come out from the body, vehemently attack the other and kill him. The burning sensation in the body decreased for a short time after I had that vision. I suffered from that burning sensation continually for six months before the Papa-purusha was burnt up."

We were told by the Master that a similar sensation came on him again, a short time after the burning up of the Papa-purusha. The Master had then gone beyond the limits of the devotion enjoined by the scriptures and became engaged in the worship and other services of the divine Mother with Ragatmika devotion, in the manner spoken of before. That burning sensation gradually increased so much that he could not find relief even though he placed a wet towel on his head and kept his body immersed in the waters of the Ganga for three or four hours. We shall describe elsewhere[1] the easy means by which the Brahmani, when she came later, cured it and pointed out that the said sensation owed its origin to his longing for the full vision of the divine Lord and his pang of separation from Him. The Master suffered again from that burning sensation in his body later at the time of practising the Madhura-bhava, the "sweet mood as of the spouse of God". Hriday said, "The Master then suffered from a pain and a burning sensation similar to that felt by one when a potful of live embers is placed within one's breast. He suffered long from that sensation, which came on him from time to time. A few years after his Sadhana came to an end, he became acquainted with Kanailal Ghosal, a lawyer of Barasat, who was an advanced Sadhaka of Sakti. He advised the Master to put on his person an amulet encasing the Mantra of his chosen Ideal. That sensation came to an end when the amulet was put on."

11. The Rani thought of worldly objects at the time of worship. The Master punished her

Mathur went back to Janbazar and told the Rani of the extraordinary worship performed by the Master. The devout Rani was delighted to hear of it. She used to come to the Dakshineswar temple, listen to the songs sung by the Bhattacharya and had already grown affectionate towards him. On the occasion when the image of Govinda broke, she was astonished to know of his intelligence purified by devotion.[2] It did not therefore take her long to understand that it was possible for a heart like that of the Master to have the grace of the universal Mother. But an event occurred shortly afterwards, which made it very likely that the Rani and Mathur would waver in that faith. One day the Rani went to the temple to worship and to pay her obeisance to the divine Mother. But as she was engaged in these services, she was eagerly thinking of the possible success or failure in a law-suit regarding her worldly affairs, instead of being absorbed in her worship. The Master was then sitting there and singing songs for her at her request. The Master, who was in ecstasy, understood that state of her mind and taught her to abstain from worldly thoughts in the presence of the divine Mother, by striking her tender person, saying, "That thought even here!" The Rani, a spiritual aspirant fit to have the grace of the universal Mother, detected the weakness of her mind and became repentant. Her devotion to the Master increased a great deal on account of this event. We shall mention all these things in detail elsewhere.[1]

12. With the development of devotion, the Master's external worship dropped off. His predicament at this time

A short while after this, the Master's devotion and exaltation due to bliss increased so much by virtue of enjoying the divine Mother's constant company that the performance of the daily and special occasional services of the goddess was by no means possible for him. The Master used to give an example of how, with advancement in the spiritual state, the actions enjoined by the scriptures drop off by themselves. He said, "The mother-in-law allows her daughter-in-law to eat all kinds of food and do all manner of work till she conceives; but, as soon as she is with child, a little discrimination about food and work begins. Later, as she is in an advanced stage, her work gets extremely limited. When gradually she approaches

parturition, she is not given any work at all, lest harm should befall the embryo. And, when at last the baby is born, her days are spent only in caressing it." Similarly the Master's renunciation of external worship and of the services of the divine Mother took place naturally. The Master was now no more conscious of the proper time for worship and other services. Always beside himself in spiritual moods, he served the universal Mother whensoever and howsoever he liked. For instance, he sometimes offered food before performing the worship; or, absorbed in meditation he forgot completely the idea of his separate existence from Her and decorated his own person with the flowers, sandal-paste, etc., brought for the worship of the goddess. We were told by the Master himself that on many occasions his actions assumed this form by virtue of his constant vision of the divine Mother inside and outside. And we were further told that, if that mood of his losing himself in Her decreased a little and if he was prevented from seeing the Mother even for a short time, such an overwhelming restlessness came on him that he threw himself violently on the ground, rubbing his face against it and filling the quarters with vehement wailings. He struggled for life and his breath was about to stop. He could take no notice of the fact that his whole body was getting cut and bruised and covered with blood. He was equally unaware whether he stumbled on fire or into water. Immediately afterwards, when he got the vision of the Mother, that mental attitude of his vanished, and his face beamed wonderfully with joy, and he became a different person, so to say.

13. What Hriday said about the Master's giving up worship. Mathur's doubt about the Master's condition at that time

Mathur got the temple worship conducted somehow through the Master till the latter reached the state described above. But, finding that it was impossible to manage the worship that way now, he resolved to make some other arrangement. Hriday said, "There was a special reason for that resolve of Mathur's. One day the Master suddenly got up from the worshipper's seat in a state of ecstasy and saw Mathur Babu and me in the temple. He then took hold of me by the hand, made me sit on that seat and said to Mathur, 'Hriday will perform the worship from today. Mother says, she will

accept his worship in the same manner as mine', and the devout Mathur accepted, those words of the Master as the command of the Mother." We cannot say how far Hriday's words are true; but Mathur knew well that it was impossible for the Master to perform worship and other services daily, in that condition of his.

14. Treatment of the Master by Gangaprasad Sen

We have already said that Mathur's mind was attracted towards the Master from the day when he first saw him. Since then he tried to remove all inconveniences and to keep him at Dakshineswar. Gradually afterwards, the more he became acquainted with the Master's extraordinary noble qualities, the more, was charmed by them; and he used to serve the Master according to his needs, viewed him with an affectionate eye and always protected him against unreasonable oppression of others. Here is an instance: Mathur made arrangements for him to have a daily drink of the syrup of candy, as he knew that the humour of wind was strong in his body; conscious that the Master might possibly be interfered with when he was employed in the worship born of Ragatmika devotion, Mathur protected him against all attacks. We have elsewhere[1] mentioned a few other examples of this nature. But it seems to us probable that he had doubts in his mind about the Master's condition from the day he struck Rani Rasmani by way of teaching her. He concluded that the Master was suffering from insanity. Unable to realize the advanced state of the Master, the worldly-minded Mathur, it seems, inferred that there was in him a combination of spirituality and insanity, for he arranged at that time for the Master's treatment under Gangaprasad Sen, the well-known Ayurvedic physician of Calcutta.

Thinking that the Master had a physical disease, Mathur not only made all arrangements for his treatment, but also tried to comfort him by giving reasons and arguments, so that he might control his mind and proceed with his spiritual practices. We have described for the reader elsewhere,[2] how all these reasons and arguments of Mathur proved vain and how he was proved wrong by the Master, when he saw that two china-roses, one red and the other white, blossomed together in the same twig of a red china-rose plant.

Knowing that it was impossible for the Master to perform the fixed daily service of the Goddess in the temple, Mathur made another arrangement for it. He appointed Ramtarak Chattopadhyaya, the Master's cousin, who had come to the temple in search of a job, to worship the Goddess until the Master came round. These events came to pass in the year 1858.

15. Haladhari came to Dakshineswar

The Master used to call Ramtarak, Haladhari. The Master told us many things about him on many occasions. Haladhari was a good scholar and Sadhaka, who was devoted to rites and practices according to the scripture. He had proficiency in the *Bhagavata,* the *Adhyatma-Ramayana* and other books, and read them daily. Although he had greater love for Vishnu than for the Devi he had no aversion to the latter. Therefore, though a devotee of Vishnu, he did not feel any hesitation in taking charge of the worship of the divine Mother at the request of Mathur. But before Haladhari took that charge, Mathur made an arrangement, at his request, for supplying him with raw foodstuffs, so that he might cook for himself. We are told that Mathur had at first objected to it and asked, "Why? Do not Ramakrishna, your cousin, and Hriday, your nephew, take Prasada in the temple?" The intelligent Haladhari replied, "My cousin is in an exalted spiritual state. Blemishes will not accrue to him any way. I am not in that state; it will therefore be reprehensible for me to break my principle regarding food." Mathur was pleased to hear his words. Haladhari took raw provisions and daily cooked them for himself under the Panchavati.

Although Haladhari had no aversion to Sakti, he was not disposed to offer animal sacrifice to the Goddess. As it was the rule in the temple to offer animal sacrifice to the divine Mother at the time of festivals, he could not perform the worship at those times with joy and zeal. He performed the worship for about a month when, while performing his Sandhya one day, he, it is said, saw the Goddess assume a terrible form and say to him, "Get up and go away from here. You shall not perform the worship; Your son shall die on account of the offence of your irreverent worship." It is said that he received the news of his son's death a few days after this event. He said everything about this from the beginning to the end to the Master, and

from then ceased to worship the Goddess. Therefore, since then Hriday began to perform the worship of Kali and Haladhari conducted the worship of Radha-Govinda. We heard of this event from Hriday's brother, Rajaram.

Footnote

1. III. 6.

1. *Gita*, IX.22.

1. IV. 1.

2. III. 5.6.

1. III. 5.

1. III. 6.

2.2. III. 6.

CHAPTER VIII
THE LAST PART OF THE STORY OF THE FIRST FOUR YEARS OF SADHANA

1. The ascertainment of the time of Sadhana

When we study the period of the Master's Sadhana, we must first of all remember what he himself told us about it. It will not then be difficult to ascertain its date. The reader has already been told that we have heard from him that he was engaged in the disciplines of various faiths and doctrines for twelve long years continually. It is ascertained from the deed of gift executed by Rani Rasmani, regarding the temple endowment, that the Kali temple at Dakshineswar was consecrated on Thursday, May 31, 1855. At the end of the same year the Master assumed the office of the priest. It is therefore perfectly certain that the period of his Sadhana extends practically from 1856 to 1867. But, although this period is clearly ascertained as the period of his Sadhana, we shall see that he went on a pilgrimage to some holy places at the end of the period and engaged himself in Sadhana there and again at Dakshineswar after his return.

2. Three main divisions of this period

We proceed to divide this period of twelve years into three divisions, each of which we are to study separately —first, the four years from 1856 to 1859, the main events of which period we have already studied; secondly, the same number of years from 1860 to 1863 when, under the instruction of the Brahmani, he went through, according to the scriptural injunctions, all the disciplines prescribed in the sixty-four main Tantras; and thirdly, an

equal period from 1864 to 1867, during which he was initiated in the Mantra of Rama by the monk of the Ramawat denomination, named Jatadhari, and got the image of Ramalala; and again he was engaged in Sadhana in a woman's apparel during this period for six months in order to realize the spiritual attitude of a female friend of God; spoken of in the Vaishnava books; he also received at this time the Vedic Mahavakya from Totapuri and ascended the Nirvikalpa plane of consciousness; and at last he was taught the religion of Islam by Govinda.[1] During the period of these twelve years, he practised the discipline of the Sakhya-Bhava according to the Vaishnava scriptures and came in contact with the secondary Vaishnava denominations of Kartabhaja, Navarasika, etc. That he was closely acquainted with these denominations is very clear from the fact that Vaishnavacharan Goswami and other Sadhakas following these faiths came to the Master for spiritual help. If we divide the period of his Sadhana into the three divisions mentioned above and consider the matter deeply, we shall find that there is a clear difference of kind between the Sadhanas of the first division and those of the other two.

3. A recapitulation of the Master's mental states—visions, etc., during the first four years of his Sadhana

We see that the only external help he got at the beginning of his Sadhana was the initiation he had from Sri Kenaram Bhattacharya. He straightway proceeded to practise that discipline. The extreme eagerness of his heart for the realization of God was his main support during that period. This eagerness became gradually stronger and stronger, shattered his body and mind in a short time and recast them into an unexpected new mould. Besides, it produced in him a great love for his chosen Ideal and made him pass beyond the firm steel-frame of the rules and regulations of ritualistic devotion, led him forward on the path of Ragatmika devotion and thus conferred on him the wealth of the immediate knowledge of the universal Mother and endowed him with Yogic powers.

4. Why had the Master to practise Sadhana over again, though he had the immediate knowledge of the divine Mother at that time? Peace is

realizable when one sees the identity of one's own immediate experience with the teachings of the Guru and of the Sastras.

The reader may perhaps say, "What then was left over? The Master had the aim of his life fulfilled at that very time; why did he then practise Sadhana afterwards?" We should like to say in reply that although this is true in a way, Sadhana was necessary afterwards. The Master used to say, "Trees and creepers flower first and bear fruit next, according to the usual law of nature; but, there are a few; among them whose fruits come out first and flowers next." The development of the Master's mind in the field of Sadhana took place exactly like that of the latter class of trees and creepers. Therefore, that objection of the reader is true in a way. But although the Master had such visions etc., at the beginning of his Sadhana he could not become perfectly sure whether they were real and whether he had reached the ultimate goal, till he could compare them with the experiences of the Sadhakas recorded in the scriptures and realize once again those experiences of his by following the practices sanctioned by the scriptures. Therefore Sadhana was afterwards necessary for him. It became necessary for him to realize again, by following the path and procedure described in the scriptures, what he had experienced before by the incomprehensible grace of the divine Mother, with the help of only the eagerness of his heart. The scriptures say that the aspirant cannot be absolutely convinced till, by comparing the divine visions and the extraordinary experiences of his own spiritual life with the truth taught by his Guru and with the experiences of the Sadhakas of past ages recorded in the scriptures, he finds them to be perfectly identical. Having his doubts completely dispelled the aspirant becomes endowed with infinite peace as soon as he compares the three, namely, the truth taught by his Guru, the experiences of the ancient race of Sadhakas recorded in the scriptures and those realized by himself, and finds them identical.

5. It happened to Suka, the son of Vyasa

As an example of what has been said above, we may point to an event in the life of Sukadeva, the foremost of Paramahamsas, the son of Vyasa. Sukadeva, untouched by Maya, used to have various divine visions and

extraordinary experiences in his life from his birth. For the purpose of ascertaining whether they were real and whether he had reached the goal, he studied the Vedas, the six branches of study[1] auxiliary to them and other Sastras with his father, Vyasa, knower of all the scriptures. When his studies came to an end, he said to his father, "I have been experiencing from my birth, all the spiritual states recorded in the scriptures; but I cannot be perfectly sure that these states and experiences are the ultimate truth. So, please tell me now what you yourself have experienced regarding those things." Vyasa, of supreme knowledge, reflected within himself, "I have always been teaching Suka the goal of spirituality and the ultimate truth telling him the experiences of my own life resulting from spiritual practices, but doubts have not been removed from his mind. He thinks that although he has been desirous of knowing the truth, I, being overpowered by fatherly affection, have not given him the whole truth and so have not removed his mental anxiety. Therefore it is good for him to hear these things from some other wise man." Thinking so, Vyasa said, "I am unable to remove your doubt; it is not unknown to you that Janaka, the king of Mithila, is truly a man of knowledge; go to him and have all your problems solved." So directed by his father, Suka, it is written in the *Mahabharata,* went immediately to Mithila. Taught by Janaka, a sage among kings, who told him of the experience that knowers of Brahman have, Suka found a complete identity between the instruction of the Guru, the words of the scriptures and the experiences of his own life.

6. Another reason why the Master practised Sadhana later. Not for himself, but for others

Besides the above-mentioned reasons, there was another profound reason why the Master practised Sadhana later. We shall merely mention it here. The aim of the Master's Sadhana was not the attainment of peace only in his own life. The divine Mother of us all made him assume a body for good of the world. He had therefore, to be acquainted with the Sadhanas of all religions and their ultimate goal, so that he might be in a position to become a true spiritual teacher. Therefore an extraordinary effort is seen on the Master's part to ascertain, by actual practice, the truth or falsity of all the

religious doctrines. That is not all. By producing in a natural way in the life of this unlettered person, through his practices, the spiritual states recorded in the scriptures, the divine Mother proved to the modern age the truth of the Vedas, the Bible, the Puranas, the Koran, and all other religious scriptures. That was why there was no cessation of his Sadhana even after he had personally attained peace. The more we proceed to study this extraordinary life, the more clearly shall we understand that, with a view to accomplishing the specific end mentioned above, the universal Mother brought to the Master, at the proper time, perfected men and scholars of every denomination and, making him hear from them all about religious teachings and practices, gave him the power of mastering them through his wonderful memory, which retained everything heard only once.

7. The aspirant realizes God when true eagerness arises in him. How much of that eagerness was there in the Master's life

We have said before that during the first four years of his Sadhana the Master depended for God-realization mainly on his intense eagerness. No one came to him at that time to help him in his spiritual progress by guiding him along the path prescribed by the scriptures. Therefore, the only means he had recourse to was the intense eagerness which is the common requisite of all sadhanas. As the Master had the vision of the divine Mother with the help of eagerness only, it is also proved that an aspirant may have God-vision similarly, even without any external aid. But we forget very often to reflect how great must be the degree of intensity of this eagerness in order that one may reach one's end that way. This becomes clear to us if we study the Master's life at this time. We have seen that under the impulse of that intense eagerness, his firm physical and mental habits and impressions expressed in his actions and feelings, such as eating, sleeping, shame, fear, etc., vanished into thin air. He paid no attention even to the preservation of his life, let alone physical health. The Master said, "As there was no attention at all at that time to the cleaning of the body, the hairs of the head became long and got matted owing to dirt and dust adhering to them. At the time of meditation the body used to become motionless like the trunk of a tree. Thinking it to be an inert thing, birds came and remained sitting on the

head without any hesitation and stirred up the dust in the hair in search of small particles of rice! Again, impatient on account of the separation from the divine Lord, I rubbed my face against the ground so vehemently that it got cut and bruised and bled in many places. I had no consciousness of how the whole day slipped away in prayer, meditation, devotional exercises, offering of the self, and so on. When afterwards, at the approach of the evening, conch-shells were blown and bells rung, I remembered that the day was at an end. Another day passed in vain; and I had not yet seen the Mother. Intense sorrow seized me and made the heart so restless that I could no longer remain calm. I threw myself violently on the ground saying, 'Mother, Thou hast not shown Thyself to me even yet.' I filled the quarters with wailing and struggled on account of pain. People said, 'He has got colic pain and that is why he is crying so much.' "

When we were with the Master, he told us time and again those events of the time of his Sadhana in order to bring home to us the necessity for intense eagerness of heart for the realization of God, and said regretfully, "People shed floods of tears at the death of their wives, children, and the like, or at the loss of worldly possessions, but who do so because they have not realized God? Yet they say, 'We called on Him so much and still He did not show Himself.' Let them but once weep for God with such eagerness and let me see whether He keeps Himself back without revealing Himself." These words used to sting us to the quick. When we heard them, it became clear to us that he could speak so assuredly, only because he had found them true early in his life.

8. The Master followed in Mahavir's footsteps and practised the Sadhana of the Dasya-bhava

The Master did not rest satisfied with having only the vision of the divine Mother during the first four years of his Sadhana. His mind was naturally attracted towards Raghuvir, his family Deity, after he had had the vision of the divine Mother when he was in the Bhavamukha[1] state. Knowing that with the help of devotion it was possible to have, like Mahavir, the vision of Ramachandra, he engaged himself in Sadhana, assuming Mahavir's attitude, for the purpose of attaining perfection in the Dasya-bhava. The Master said

that, thinking of Mahavir incessantly at that time, he became so much absorbed that he forgot altogether for some time his separate existence and individuality. “At that time,” said the Master, “I had to walk, take my food and do all other actions like Mahavir. I did not do so of my own accord, but the actions so happened of themselves, I tied my cloth round my waist so that it might look like a tail and walked jumping; I ate nothing but fruits and roots, which again I did not feel inclined to eat when skinned. I spent much of my time on trees and always cried, ‘Raghuvir, Raghuvir’, with a deep voice. Both my eyes assumed a restless expression like those of the animals of that species, and it is marvellous that the lower end of the backbone lengthened at that time by nearly an inch.”[1] When we heard the last mentioned fact, we asked, “Sir, does that part of your body continue to be so even now?” He said, “No, in course of time it assumed slowly its previous natural size when the mastery of that mood over the mind had ceased.”

9. The description of the vision of Sri Sita during the Master’s Sadhana of Dasyabhakti

An extraordinary vision and experience came to pass in the life of the Master when he practised the Dasya-bhakti. That vision and experience was so novel, so different from his previous ones, that it was deeply imprinted on his mind and was always fresh in his memory. He said, “One day at that time I was sitting under the Panchavati—not meditating, merely sitting—when an incomparable, effulgent female figure appeared before me illumining the whole place. It was not that figure alone that I saw then, but also the trees and plants of the Panchavati, the Ganga and all other objects. I saw that the figure was that of a woman; for, there were in her no signs of a goddess, such as the possession of three eyes, etc. But the extraordinary, spirited, and solemn expression of that face, manifesting love, sorrow, compassion, and endurance, was not generally seen even in the figures of goddesses. Looking graciously at me, that goddess-woman was advancing from north to south towards me with a slow, grave gait. I wondered who she might be, when a black-faced monkey came suddenly, nobody knew whence, and sat at her feet and someone within my mind exclaimed, ‘Sita,

Sita who was all sorrow all her life, Sita the daughter of king Janaka, Sita to whom Rama was her very life!' Saying 'Mother' repeatedly, I was then going to fling myself at her feet, when she came quickly and entered this (showing his own body). Overwhelmed with joy and wonder, I lost all consciousness and fell down. Before that, I had had no vision in that manner without meditating or thinking. That was the first vision of its kind. I have been suffering like her all my life perhaps because I saw first of all Sita, who was miserable from her birth."[1]

10. The Master planted the Panchavati with his own hands

Feeling the need for a suitable sacred place for practising austerities, the Master expressed to Hriday a desire to plant a new Panchavati[2] at that time. Hriday said, "The small pond called the Duck pond near the Panchavati was then re-excavated and the piece of land near the old Panchavati was filled up with the mud from that pond and made level. The Amalaki tree, therefore, under which the Master used to meditate before, was destroyed." The Master then planted with his own hands a holy fig tree to the west of the place where the Sadhana-hut now stands and made Hriday plant the saplings of a banian tree, an Asoka tree, a Vilva tree and an Amalaki tree.[3] And planting saplings of the holy basil and Aparajita creepers, he had the whole place hedged with the help of a temple gardener named Bhartabhari, in the wonderful way described elsewhere.[1] The holy basil plants and the Aparajita creepers grew up so high and dense in a short time on account of the Master's regular watering and care bestowed on them that no one from outside could see him when he sat for meditation within the enclosure.

11. The Master practised Hathayoga

After Rani Rasmani consecrated the Kali temple, the holy travellers such as monks desirous of visiting Puri and Gangasagar began to accept the hospitality afforded by the devout Rani and to rest for a few days at the Dakshineswar temple when going to and returning from those two places of pilgrimage.[2] The Master said that many perfected souls and great Sadhakas used to come there from that time. Instructed by one of them, he seems to

have practised at this time Pranayama and other exercises of Hathayoga. One day while he was describing to us the following incident regarding Haladhari, he hinted at it. He forbade us later to practise the Hathayoga exercises, because he himself practised them and knew their results. Approached by some of us for instruction on it, he said to us, "These practices are not for this age. Living beings are shortlived and their lives depend on food in the Kaliyuga; where is the time in this age to practise Rajayoga, in other words, to call on God, after making the body firm by the practise of Hathayoga? Again, if one wants to practise those exercises, one has to live constantly with a teacher perfect in that Yoga and follow for a long time very hard rules regarding food, rest, exercises, etc., according to his instruction; the slightest deviation from those rules produces diseases in the Sadhaka's body and, on many occasions, causes even his death. Therefore, it is not necessary to practise these things. Besides, is it not for the purpose of restraining the mind that one has to restrain the vital air by practising Pranayama, etc.? You will see that both mind and vital forces will of themselves be gradually restrained by meditation and devotion to God. Human beings have short lives and possess little capacity in the Kaliyuga; this is why the divine Lord has graciously made their path to realization of Him so easy to tread. In this age if the feelings of anxiety and void, like those felt at the death of one's wife or son, are felt for God and these last even for twenty-four hours only in one's mind, He is bound to reveal Himself."

12. Curse by Haladhari

We have told the reader elsewhere in the Lilaprasanga[1] that the devout Sadhakas who are the followers of the Smritis very often have recourse to Tantras in practice. Such persons, belonging to the Vaishnava denomination, pursue the path of Sadhana of Parakiya[2] love. We have also told the readers that Haladhari was a very learned Vaishnava and a faithful observer of the scriptural rites and practices; he also pursued secretly that path of Sadhana some time after he was employed for the worship of Radha and Govinda. People came to know this in time and started whispering; but there was a belief prevalent that whatever he said of anybody came true; so, nobody

was bold enough to discuss or cut jokes on it in his presence lest he should incur Haladhari's displeasure. The Master too came to know of that practice of his elder cousin. Finding that people were talking of it and calumniating him behind his back, the Master, outspoken and fearless as he was, told Haladhari everything plainly. Thereupon the latter became very angry and said, "Dare you, though being younger, despise me thus? Blood shall gush out of your mouth." The Master tried to appease him in various ways by explaining the reason for his speaking so to him, but he did not give ear to whatever the Master said.

One day, shortly after this event, at at about 8 or 9 p.m. the Master felt a creeping sensation in his palate and actually blood began to gush out of his mouth. The Master said, "The colour of that blood was like that of the juice of kidneybean leaves. It was so thick that a portion of it fell away from the mouth, and a portion coagulated within, and was hanging like the aerial roots of a banian tree from the lips near the front teeth. I tried to stop the bleeding by pressing a piece of cloth against the palate but the bleeding could not be stopped. I was much afraid to see it. All came running when they heard of it. Haladhari was performing the service in the temple then. He also was apprehensive and came quickly when he heard of it. When I saw him I said to him with tears in my eyes, 'Cousin, just see the condition you have brought on me by your curse.' He also wept to see that sorrowful condition of mine.

"A good Sadhu had come that day to the temple. He also came there when he heard the noise and, examining the colour of the blood and the spot within the mouth through which it was coming out, said, 'There is no fear; it is very good that the blood has come out. I find you practised Yoga. As the result of that practice the mouth of your Sushumna opened and the blood of the body was flowing to the head. It is very good that, instead of flowing to the head, it of itself made a channel leading to the mouth, and came out. Had this blood reached your head, you would have been in Jada-samadhi which could by no means have come to an end. The Mother of the universe has some especial purpose to accomplish with your body. That is why, I think, She has saved it.' Hearing these words of the holy man, I was, as it were, brought back to life." Haladhari's curse thus came true by way of accidental coincidence and was transformed into a boon.

13. Haladhari's views regarding the Master changed again and again

There was an element of sweet mystery in the Master's behaviour towards Haladhari. We have said before that he was the Master's uncle's son, and was older than he. He came to Dakshineswar probably in 1858 and was appointed priest to worship Sri Radha-Govinda. He held that post till some time in the year 1865. Therefore, he lived at Dakshineswar for the second four years of the Master's Sadhana period and for more than two years after that, and had the opportunity of knowing him intimately. But he could not form a definite opinion of the Master's high spiritual state. Haladhari was a man devoted to the rites and practices ordained in the scriptures; he, therefore, did not like the Master's lack of regard for his dress and sacred thread at the time of ecstasy. He thought that his younger cousin had become mad or non-conformist in ritualistic conduct. He went sometimes the length of telling Hriday, "Hriday, he gives up his wearing-cloth and the sacred thread; that is very bad. It is due to a great accumulation of the results of virtuous actions in previous births that one is born in a Brahmin family. Yet he considers the state of a Brahmin to be a trifling thing and wants to give it up. Has he realized a state high enough to do this with impunity? Hriday, he has some faith in your words, so you should keep an eye on him that he may not behave thus. It will be proper to restrain him from doing all this even by binding him hand and foot."

Again, he was charmed to see the floods of tears flowing from the Master's eyes at the time of worship, his wonderful joy on hearing songs praising the glory of the Divine, and his extraordinary eagerness for the realization of God. He thought all those states of his younger cousin were certainly due to an infusion of divine spirit; they were not seen to come otherwise on human beings. Haladhari became surprised to see and hear all these things and sometimes said to Hriday, "Hriday, you must have felt some extraordinary power in him; you would not other wise have served him so faithfully."

14. Haladhari gave up his high regard for the Master, the moment he sat to discuss the scriptures with his pinch of snuff

Always assailed by doubts, Haladhari's mind could not come to any assured conclusion about the Master's real state and kept oscillating between regard and pity, if not hatred. The Master said, "Haladhari became charmed to see me at the time of worship in the temple and said on many occasions, 'Ramakrishna, I have recognized your real nature.' To that I often replied jokingly, 'Beware lest you should get confused once more.' He said, 'You can by no means throw dust in my eyes again; there is surely a charge of divinity in you; I have understood it thoroughly this time.' I heard his words and said, 'Very well, let me see how long the conviction lasts.' When, however, Haladhari, after finishing the service in the temple, took a pinch of snuff and started a discussion on the *Bhagavata,* the *Gita,* the *Adhyatma-Ramayana* or some other books, he became immediately a different man on account of egoism. I then went there and said, 'I have realized all the states of which you read in the scriptures; I can understand all these.' No sooner had he heard it than he said, 'Indeed! You are a big fool. Is it for you to understand all these things?' I said, 'I say in truth, One who is within this (showing his own body) explains everything regarding the One of whom you spoke just now.' Hearing this Haladhari got irritated and said, 'Hence! queer, big fool! Which scripture speaks of an incarnation of God except Kalki, in the Kaliyuga? You have become insane and so you think as you do.' I laughed and said, 'Did you not say just now that there would be no confusion again?' But who would give ear to all that then? This happened not once or twice but on many occasions. One day he saw me sitting naked on a branch of the banian tree of the Panchavati and passing water. He became thenceforward absolutely certain that I was possessed by a ghost who had been a Brahmin in his mortal life."

15. The Master taught Haladhari the truth about Kali when the latter said She consisted of Tamoguna

We have spoken of the death of the son of Haladhari who was a follower of Vishnu. Since that event he had the conviction that Kali consisted of Tamoguna. One day he went to the extent of saying to the Master, "Can there be spiritual progress resulting from the worship of a deity consisting of Tamas? Why do you worship that goddess with so much care? "The

Master heard this, but did not then give him a reply; but pained to hear his chosen Ideal slandered, he went to the Kali temple and asked the Mother of the universe with tears in his eyes, "Mother, Haladhari, a scholar, well versed in the scriptures, says Thou consistest of Tamoguna; art Thou truly such?" When he was told the real truth about it by the divine Mother, he was filled with joy and ran immediately to Haladhari. Jumping then straight on his shoulders he said again and again in an excited voice, "You say, Mother consists of Tamas. Is it so? Mother is all—She has become the three Gunas and again She is the pure Sattvaguna." Haladhari then had his inner eye opened, as it were, by the words and touch of the Master, who was in ecstasy! Seated then in the worshipper's seat, Haladhari accepted heartily what the Master said. And having seen the manifestation of the divine Mother Herself in him, he took a handful of flowers mixed with sandal paste and offered it with devotion at his lotus feet. Shortly after, Hriday came and asked him, "Do you not say, uncle, that Ramakrishna is possessed by a ghost? Why then did you worship him?" "I don't know why," replied Haladhari, "he came back from the Kali temple and astonished me in such a way that I forgot everything and saw the light of God in him! Whenever I go to Ramakrishna at the Kali temple he produces such feelings in me! Oh, that bewildering incident! I cannot understand anything."

Although Haladhari saw divine light in the Master over and over again, he, when he took snuff and sat for scriptural discussion, got intoxicated with the egoism arising from scholarship and became his former self again, like the rat of the story "Punarmushika"[1]

16. Haladhari scolded the Master on seeing him taking the remains of the food left by the poor people in their plates. The Master's reply thereto

It is clear from the behaviour of Haladhari narrated above that until the attachment to lust and gold vanishes, the practice of external cleanliness and the knowledge of the scriptures are not of much avail and cannot produce in man the knowledge of the ultimate truth. Looking upon the poor People who came to take Prasada at the Dakshineswar temple as Narayana, God Himself, the Master, we said before, ate a little of the remains of the food left in their plates. Annoyed at this, Haladhari said to him, "I shall see how

you marry your children." Intensely irritated with anger by those words of Haladhari, who was proud of his Vedantic knowledge, he said, "Don't you, then, O wretch, say that the Sastras enjoin us to look upon all beings as Brahman and the world as unreal? Do you think I shall say like you that the world is unreal and at the same time beget children? Fie on your Sastric knowledge."

17. Puzzled by Haladhari's scholarship the Master was assailed by doubts but was blessed with a vision and the mandate "Remain in Bhavamukha" from the divine Mother

The childlike Master, confused sometimes by Haladhari's scholarship, ran to the universal Mother for Her opinion on what should be done. One day, we were told, he proved that the divine experiences in ecstasy were all untrue and pointed out, with the help of the scriptures, that God was beyond existence and non-existence. Great was the Master's perturbation. Narrating this incident he said later, thought that all the divine forms I saw and the divine words I heard during Bhavasamadhi were then all a delusion. Mother, I saw, had indeed deceived me. Extremely anxious, I cried with the feeling of wounded love and said to Mother, 'Shouldst Thou, O Mother, deceive me so, because I am unlettered and ignorant?' That cry and agony would not stop. I sat and wept in the 'mansion'. What I saw some time afterwards was a fog-like smoke rising suddenly from the floor and filling some space in front of me. I saw later in that smoke a beautiful living face of golden complexion, with beard reaching to the breast! That figure looked steadfastly at me and said with a profound voice, 'My child, remain in Bhavamukha.' That figure repeated those words thrice and immediately dissolved in the fog, and the fog-like smoke also vanished into the void. When I had that vision, I got back my peace of mind." One day the Master himself described this event to Swami Premananda. The Master said that the same doubt arose in his mind once again when he remembered those words of Haladhari. "Sitting for worship," said our Master, "I cried and pressed Mother importunately for a solution of the problem; Mother then appeared near the worship jar in the guise of a woman named 'Rati's mother' and said, 'Do remain in Bhavamukha.' " Again when Tota Puri, the

travelling teacher, left Dakshineswar after imparting to him the Vedantic knowledge and the Master dwelt in the Nirvikalpa plane of consciousness continually for six months, he heard in his heart of hearts at the end of that period the incorporeal voice of the divine Mother, “Remain in Bhavamukha.”

18. How long Haladhari stayed in the Kali temple

Haladhari lived for about seven years in the Dakshineswar temple. Therefore he saw with his own eyes all these—the Sadhu of perfect knowledge behaving like a ghoul, the Brahmani the holy man of the Ramawat denomination named Jatadhari, and Sri Tota Puri, coming to Dakshineswar one after another. We were told by the Master himself that Haladhari and Tota Puri sat occasionally together and read the *Adhyatma-Ramayana* and other scriptures. The above-mentioned events concerning Haladhari occurred at different times while he was in the Dakshineswar temple. But we have told the reader all of them here together for the sake of convenience.

19. A discussion on the divine inebriation of the Master

It is clear beyond doubt, from the discussion of the Master’s life of Sadhana so far, that, although he was then considered mad by the ordinary people, he was in fact not so; neither did he suffer from any disease or derangement of the brain. An intense eagerness for the realization of God arose in his heart. He could not then control himself, on account of the impulse of that eagerness. People said that he had gone mad, for, with an intense eagerness for the realization of God incessantly consuming his heart, he could not mix with people or spend his time laughing and weeping over ordinary matters. And who can do so? When the anguish of the heart transcends the normal power of endurance, who can control himself and who can, with mind and speech at variance with each other, keep pace with a world running amuck for lust and gold? But the limit to the power of endurance, one might say, is not the same for all; some become overwhelmed with a little misery or happiness; others, again, remain firm

and steady like a rock in spite of there being a profound agitation in their hearts arising from either of them. Therefore, how can one know the limit of a man's endurance? In reply let us say that his power of endurance was extraordinary. This will be very clearly understood if we reflect on the other events of his life. Need the extraordinary endurance of the mind and body of a person like him be mentioned—a person who could remain calm in spite of being half-fed or unfed, and sleepless for twelve long years, who rejected the offers of immense wealth as many times as they came, because they were an obstacle on the path to the realization of God? There are innumerable other instances; but we desist from mentioning them here. The careful reader will meet with them at every turn, as he goes on with this life.

20. Only ignorant people, and not the Sadhakas, regarded it as due to a disease

Again, the above-mentioned state of the Master appeared to be due to a disease, in the eyes of those people alone who were extremely attached to worldly objects. No one except Mathur, it is clear, was then present at the Kali temple at Dakshineswar, who could, with the help of reason and imagination, ascertain partially at least, the mental state of the Master. We cannot say where Kenaram Bhattacharya vanished immediately after initiating the Master; for, nothing was heard of him from Hriday or any one else after that event. Therefore, the ignorant, covetous officers of the Kali temple were the only persons left to judge the actions and mental states of the Master at that time. What they said cannot at all be regarded as proof. It is, therefore, certain that the words of the holy men who came to Dakshineswar at that time are the only reliable proofs of it. From what has been heard from the Master and others, it is known that those Sadhakas and perfected men, far from deeming him a victim of insanity, had always a very high opinion of him.

21. The Master cannot be said to have been suffering from a disease, when we see his actions and behaviour at this time

When we study the events following this period, we see that he followed immediately any advice given by any one for the good of his health, till, led by the impulse of the intense eagerness for the realization of God, he completely lost consciousness of his body and of the world outside, and hence lost all care for his own life. He never tried to persist in his own resolve. When people said, "Let him be under treatment", he agreed; when they said that he should be taken to his mother at Kamarpukur, he readily consented; neither, again, when his marriage was proposed, did he dissent. Considering all these how can we take his actions and behaviour to have been prompted by insanity?

Moreover, though he tried indeed to keep himself aloof from worldly people and worldly affairs, on many occasions he not only had no objection to going and mixing with people, but eagerly sought and joined them whenever they came together to worship God and sing His glory. This is clearly seen when we find that he used to visit the temple of the ten Maha-vidyas at Baranagar, went sometimes to pay his obeisance to the universal Mother at Kalighat, and joined the great annual festival at Panihati. In those places also, he sometimes met and had conversations with Sadhakas well versed in the scriptures. We have understood from the little we know of these things, that those Sadhakas held him in great veneration.

22. Vaishnavacharan saw the Master for the first time during the festival at Panihati in 1859. His idea about the Master

We may mention, for example, the fact of the Master's visit to Panihati during the great festival in A.D. 1859. There, on that day, he saw Vaishnavacharan, the son of Sri Utsavananda Goswami for the first time. Some of us have heard from Hriday and also from the Master himself that he went to Panihati and sat for some time in the Master Manimohan Sen's temple, when Vaishnavacharan came and saw him and he immediately came to the definite conclusion that the Master was in a high state of spirituality and that he was one of the rarest of great souls. Vaishnavacharan spent on that day the greater part of his time with the Master in the festival ground, and, purchasing at his own expense, mangoes, fried rice, curds and sweets, offered to the Lord a delicious mixture of them in earthen plates, and made

merry, partaking of the Prasada along with the Master and the devotees. Again, while returning to Calcutta after the festival, Vaishnavacharan got down at Rani Rasmani's Kali temple for the purpose of having the privilege of seeing him again and inquired about him there. When he was told that the Master had not returned from the festival, he felt disappointed. We have described elsewhere[1] how Vaishnavacharan met the Master again three or four years later and how an intimate relationship grew up between them.

23. Other kinds of Sadhana of the Master at this time—(1) "rupee-earth, earth-rupee",* (2) cleaning unclean places, (3) regarding night-soil and sandal-paste as the same

During this period of four years, he often took in his hands a few coins and clods of earth and used them to practise discrimination between the real and the unreal, with a view to completely removing from his mind the attachment to gold. He came, with the help of reasoning, to the sure conclusion, that the person who had made the realization of Brahman, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, the only goal of his life, could not derive any help whatsoever from gold any more than from a lump of earth. Therefore, repeating again and again "rupee-earth, earth-rupee", he threw them both into the Ganga, in order to make that conclusion firmly fixed in his mind. With a view to having the firm conviction that all things and persons without exception from Brahma down to a blade of grass, were the manifestations and parts of the divine Mother, the Master partook of the leavings from the plates of the poor and cleaned the place where they took their food. For the purpose of completely removing pride and egoism from his mind and of having the conviction that he was not superior in any way even to the object of universal aversion, he cleaned, like a sweeper, the abominably dirty places with his own hands; again, in order to completely obliterate from his mind the feeling of aversion and to have the conviction that both ordure and sandal-paste were the same in nature, as they were derived from the same five elements, he touched with his tongue others faeces with perfect equanimity. All these and many more extraordinary and unheard of disciplines, associated with the name of the Master were performed during this period. When we ponder over those practices and

divine visions of the Master during the first four years, it becomes clear what a unique, intense eagerness for the realization of God had seized him and with what an extraordinary faith he plunged himself into Sadhana. And simultaneously this conviction also grows in us that unaided by any outside help and by dint of his sheer eagerness for the realization of God, he succeeded in attaining the perfect vision of the divine Mother and had the ambition of his life fulfilled. And having thus achieved the results of his spiritual disciplines he proceeded to compare them with the teachings of the Guru and the Sastras.

24. The aspirant's own mind becomes his Guru at last. The Master's mind functioned as the Guru at this time. Examples of this:(i) enjoying the bliss of Kirtan in his subtle body

The Master said that when the aspirant becomes purified and sanctified by completely controlling his mind and senses by means of restraint and renunciation, his own mind occupies the position of the Guru. The waves of ideas that arise then in his mind never lead him astray; on the contrary, they show him the right path and bring on him quickly to the goal of life. During this period, the pure and holy mind of the Master became his Guru and taught him what was and what was not to be done. It did not, however, rest satisfied there, but on many occasions, assuming a form, as it were, of a different person, it came out from his body, appeared before him and encouraged him to go forward with his Sadhana. Sometimes it threatened him with punishment if he did not dive deep in a particular discipline, explaining why it should be performed and what its result would be. This is why the Master saw at the time of meditation a Sannyasin with a sharp trident in his hand come out of his body and say, "If you do not fully give up all other thoughts and meditate wholeheartedly on your chosen Ideal, I'll pierce your heart with this trident," This is why when the Papa-purusha, the embodiment of desires for enjoyment, emerged from his body, this young Sannyasin whom the Master saw also came out immediately and killed that villain. Desirous to see the images of deities or listen to the singing of God's glory in distant places, this young Sannyasin came out of the Master's body in an effulgent, form similar to his and arrived at those

places along a luminous path and returned along the same path and entered his gross body. We have been told by the Master himself of many such visions.

(ii) he saw the young Sannyasin within his own body and received instruction from him

The Master began to have the vision of this young Sannyasin within his body, almost from the commencement of his Sadhana. He became gradually accustomed to guide himself according to his advice regarding the performance or non-performance of all actions. In the course of a conversation on the extraordinary visions and experiences of his life during his Sadhana, one day, the Master said to us, "The figure of a young Sannyasin looking like me used to come out again and again from within me and instruct me on all matters; when he emerged, sometimes I had a little consciousness and, at other times, lost it altogether and lay inert, only seeing and hearing his actions and words; when afterwards he entered this gross body, I regained full consciousness. The Brahmani, Tota Puri and others came and taught me afterwards what I had heard from him previously—they taught me what I had already known. It seems from this that they came as Gurus in my life in order that the authority of the scriptures, such as the Vedas, might be maintained by my honouring their injunctions. No other reason can be found for accepting the 'naked one' and others as Gurus."

and (iii) the vision of the Master on his way to Sihar. Bhairavi Brahmani's decision about it

When the Master went to Kamarpukur during the latter part of this period of his Sadhana, another extraordinary vision occurred. This vision took place while he was going in a palanquin from Kamarpukur to Hriday's house in the village of Sihar. Witnessing under the deep blue sky a vast expanse of open fields covered with paddy, green and dark-blue in hue, with rows of trees such as the fig, the banian, etc., affording cool shade along the path, he was proceeding with a heart full of joy, when two beautiful boyish

figures of tender age suddenly came out of his body. Now advancing with a slow step, now running playfully hither and thither, sometimes going far in the fields in search of wild flowers etc., and at other times walking beside the palanquin, they laughed and joked and conversed and made merry as boys do. They thus proceeded happily for a long time and then they came back and entered his body. The learned Brahmani came to the Kali temple at Dakshineswar for the first time about a year and a half after this vision had taken place. She heard of this vision from the Master and said without being at all surprised, "My child, what you have seen is all true; Chaitanya is manifest this time in Nityananda's sheath (body)—Nityananda and Chaitanya have come together this time and are both residing in you, in one and the same receptacle." Hriday said, "Saying so, the Brahmani recited the following lines from the *Chaitanya Bhagavata:* 'Throwing his arms round Advaita's neck Sri Chaitanya says again and again: I will manifest my wonderful play once more. My form will be that of bliss during the singing of the glory of God.'

"The Brahmani quoted again, 'Gora acts his play even today. It is persons of the rarest good fortune that are privileged to witness it.' "

25. What can be gathered from these visions

When we were visiting him one day, the Master said to us in connection with the topic of this vision, "It is true that I had that vision and it is also true that the Brahmani said so when she heard of it. But how can I say what the real meaning of it is?" From these words of the Master regarding that vision of his, we think that at this time the Master got some clear indication that, identified with his body and mind, some ancient soul known to the world for very long ages was dwelling here with a view to accomplishing some important purpose. It seems that the extraordinary indication he had about his individuality with the help of these visions and experiences clearly convinced him in course of time that the One, who manifested Himself in Ayodhya and Vrindavan as Sri Ramachandra, dear to Janaki, and Sri Krishnachandra, the beloved of Radha, respectively, for the purpose of establishing religion in past ages, has incarnated Himself once more as Sri Ramakrishna in a human body in order to impart a new ideal of religion to

India and the world". For, when we were with him, we heard him say again and again, whether he was in the full enjoyment of health or suffering acutely from a disease, "The One who became Rama and Krishna is now within this case (showing his body). But His advent this time is secret."

26. The Master's visions never proved to be untrue

If we want to test the truth of the vision mentioned above, no other means can be found than believing in the words of the Master himself spoken at other times to his devotees of the inner circle. Leaving out this vision, we can have the sure conviction of the truth of all other visions of his, for, the visions of this nature occurred daily in the Master's life when we were visiting him. And his sceptical English-educated disciples were defeated, as they tried to test the truth of these visions and experiences. Though we give a few such examples elsewhere,[1] we shall record here one more for the satisfaction of the reader.

27. An example: the description of the Master's vision at the time of the worship of Durga in Suresh Chandra Mitra's house in 1885

It was the end of 1885 when the people of Calcutta— men, women and children—were all filled with joy and enthusiasm, as usual, on the occasion of the great autumn worship and festival. Although the current of that bliss was being particularly felt in the hearts of the Master's devotees, there was a great obstacle standing in the way of its manifestation; for he in whose company they felt the surge of delight was seriously ill—the Master was suffering from cancer of the throat. The devotees had hired a two-storeyed house at Shyampukur in Calcutta and had brought the Master there about a month previously. Mahendralal Sarkar, the well-known doctor, prescribed medicine and diet and was doing his best to cure the Master. But the disease had shown no sign of abatement so far; on the contrary it was worsening by degrees. The householder devotees would come to that house morning and evening, and supervise and make all necessary arrangements. Many of the young student devotees were engaged in the service of the Master at all times except when they went to have their meals. Some again would,

whenever necessary, spend all the twenty-four hours there, without going home even for their meals.

If the Master spoke much or went into ecstasy again and again, the blood in his body would flow upward, and constantly irritate the sore, which prevented the cure. Therefore the doctor advised the Master to check both the acts. The Master too was trying to follow the prescription but was in spite of himself reverting to them again and again; for, unlike ordinary men he failed to regard as precious the body, which he looked upon with contempt all his life as a trifling cage of flesh and bone, from which he had withdrawn his mind completely. As soon as a topic on God was raised, he would forget all about his body and everything about maintaining it, and joining the discussion of the topic almost with the same enthusiasm as before, would repeatedly go into ecstasy. There were many souls who came thirsting for spirituality. Unable to remain indifferent to the eagerness of their hearts, the Master taught them Sadhana in a low voice. Seeing his joy and enthusiasm in the work of ministration, to which he applied himself untiringly, many of the devotees thought that the Master's disease was simple and could be easily cured, and became free from anxiety. Some, again, opined—a strange comprehension of spiritual matters!—That the Master had purposely assumed this physical disease for bestowing his grace on the new devotees and imparting religion to many.

The doctor was visiting him almost every day in the morning or in the afternoon. While he was examining the patient, writing the prescription and advising the attendants, he would be so absorbed in listening to the Master's conversation on God that he could not take his leave even after the lapse of two or three hours. Again, putting question after question and listening for a long time to the wonderful solutions of these, he would sometimes say regretfully, "I made you talk much; it has been unwise, but don't talk with anybody for the rest of the day, and then it won't do you any harm; don't you see, your words have such attraction that, whenever I come to you, I can't leave this place for two or three hours and I have to neglect my profession. I don't even know how time flies. Anyway, don't talk so long with anyone else; (partly as a joke and partly with love and joy he said) talk thus with me only when I come, that will not do any harm." At this the doctor and all others would laugh.

Surendranath Mitra, whom the Master sometimes called Suresh Mitra, was celebrating the Durga Puja that year in his residence at Simla. Formerly his family used to celebrate it every year, but there had once been a mishap and the worship had been discontinued since then. No one of the household was bold enough to perform it after that; and if any one tried to celebrate it, all others dissuaded him vehemently. Strengthened, however, by his faith in the power of the Master, Surendranath was absolutely free from fear of any mishap due to the interference of demigods etc., and did not care at all for anybody's objections or obstructions when he had once resolved to accomplish anything. Therefore, although all the members of the household raised objections, they could not make him refrain from carrying out his resolve that year. He got the Master's approval and brought the Mother of the universe to his house and bore all the expenses himself to the exclusion of other members of the joint-family. The only element of sadness in Surendra's joy was that the Master would not be able to join the celebrations on account of his illness. Again as a few relatives fell seriously ill a few days before the commencement of the worship, he was held responsible for all that and incurred the displeasure of all the household. But unperturbed even on that account, Surendra devoutly began the worship of the divine Mother with great care and attention and invited all his fellow-disciples.

The worship pertaining to the seventh day of the lunar month had been finished the day before. It was the auspicious eighth day. Many devotees gathered together at the temporary residence of the Master at Shyampukur and were enjoying in his company the bliss and the talks and songs about the Divine. Narendranath began singing devotional songs immediately after the doctor's arrival at four in the afternoon. All were charmed by those exceedingly melodious vibrations of tunes coupled with remarkable spiritual fervour, and lost themselves completely in them. The Master was sometimes having ecstasy, at the end of which he was explaining briefly in a low voice the import of the songs to the doctor who sat beside him. Some of the devotees lost consciousness in deep spiritual emotions. There flowed in the room a strong current of bliss, which was almost palpable. Time passed unbeknown to all and it was 7-30 p.m. The doctor was startled at last. He embraced the Swami with paternal affection, took leave of the

Master and stood up, when the Master also rose from his seat smiling and entered immediately into deep Samadhi. The devotees began whispering, "Is it not the time for the Sandhi Puja? That is why the Master has entered into Samadhi. Is it a matter of little surprise that he has entered suddenly into it without knowing the time?" About half an hour after, the Master's Samadhi came to an end and the doctor bade good night.

The Master now said to the devotees about his Samadhi: "I saw that there opened a luminous path from here to Surendra's house. I saw, further, that attracted by Surendra's devotion, the Mother had appeared in the image and that a ray of light was coming out from Her third eye. I also saw that rows of lamps were lighted in the front verandah and Surendra was sitting and weeping piteously in the courtyard in front of the Mother. Go you all together to his house now. He will feel much comforted to see you."

All, including Swami Vivekananda, then saluted the Master and went to Surendra's place. They questioned him and came to know that rows of lamps were actually lighted in that verandah and, unable to check his surge of emotion, Surendra sat in the courtyard before the image and wept loudly like a boy crying "Mother", "Mother", for about an hour at the time of the Master's Samadhi. Finding the vision during the Master's Samadhi correspond to the external events in detail, the devotees felt that there was no end to their joy and amazement.

28. How Rani Rasmani and Mathur examined the Master owing to their mistaken notions

At one time during the first four years of his Sadhana, Rani Rasmani and Mathur Babu, her son-in-law, thought that the derangement of the Master's brain, produced by unbroken continence, was manifesting itself as spiritual restlessness! Considering that he might regain his health if his continence were broken and, desirous to do good to the Master thereby, they tried to tempt him through Lachmi Bai and some other beautiful harlots with their amorous gestures, first at Dakshineswar and afterwards in a house at Mechuabazar in Calcutta. The Master used to say that he saw the divine Mother in those women, and repeating "Mother" a few times, lost consciousness, and that his sense-organ became contracted and entered

completely into his body like the limbs of a tortoise. There arose, we were told, a feeling of maternal affection in the hearts of those fallen women when they saw all that and they were charmed by the childlike behaviour of the Master. Thinking that they had committed a great sin by trying to tempt him to break his continence, they begged his pardon with tears in their eyes, saluted him again and again, and bade goodbye with apprehensive minds.

Footnote

1. II. 16.

1. (1) Siksha, the science which teaches the proper pronunciation of words and laws of euphony; (2) Kalpa, that which lays down the ritual and prescribes rules for ceremonial and sacrificial acts; (3) Grammar; (4) Nirukta, the etymological explanations of difficult Vedic words; (5) the science of prosody and (6) Astronomy. They are collectively called the Vedangas.—Tr.

1. III.1&3.

1. Elongation of the Coccyx.

1. Sri Sita, the author said to some, including the translator, made a gift of her smile to the Master. So, those who saw the Master smile, knew how she smiled. —Tr.

2. Panchavati, literally a cluster of five fig trees.

3. “The holy fig tree, the Vilva tree, the Amalaki tree, the banian tree and the Asoka tree, collectively, called the “Panchavati”, should be planted in five directions for the purpose of practising austerities. The holy fig tree should be planted to the east, the Vilva to the north, the banian to the west, the Amalaki to the south and the Asoka to the south-east and a beautiful altar four-cubits square and attractive to the mind should be made in the middle.”—*Skanda Purana.*

1. III.2.
2. IV.2.

1. The name of the Bengali original of this book.—Tr.

2. II. 13 & IV. 1.

1. *Vide* Glossary.

1. IV. 1.

*. That is: This is a rupee, this is a clod of earth. Both of them are useless, so far as God-realization is concerned. Some think “rupee-earth; earth-rupee “means “rupee is earth and earth is rupee”, which is absurd, though it is conceded that both are modifications of earth. As effects, they are surely different, having different pragmatic values; but as means to that ultimate end, both are equally worthless.—Tr.

1. IV. 4.

CHAPTER IX
MARRIAGE AND RETURN TO DAKSHINESWAR

1. The Master at Kamarpukur

The Master's mother and brother were very anxious at Kamarpukur on hearing the news that he had given up priestly duties. Scarcely had two years elapsed since Ramkumar's passing away when Chandramani Devi, the Master's mother, and his brother Rameswar came to know to their utter dismay that he was suffering from 'insanity'. Misfortunes never come singly. One after another, mishaps come from all sides and darken man's life completely. This was exactly what happened to them. Gadadhar, whom Chandradevi had borne in her advanced age, was naturally very dear to her. Overwhelmed, therefore, with sorrow, she made arrangements for bringing him back home. When he was with her, she noticed his indifference, absent-mindedness and restlessness, heard his repeated and piteous cries of "Mother", "Mother", and tried various means to remedy them. Along with administering medicines, various rites propitiatory to gods and demigods were tried. This was at the end of the year 1858.

2. The Master's relatives were under the impression that he was possessed by a ghost

Although after his return home the Master generally lived his normal life, he became sometimes overwhelmed with spiritual emotions, when his deportment and behaviour became quite contrary to the normal. Again, he felt great pain on account of the burning sensation in his body. Thus, on the one hand, he displayed his usual simple and amiable behaviour towards all,

his devotion to God and mother, and his love for his friends; and on the other, there were evident in him from time to time an extraordinary contrary manifestation of an indifference to everything, an absence of shame, aversion and fear, an exuberant eagerness for attaining a vague, unknown object and an obstinate effort to clear all obstacles from the path to his desired goal. These produced in the minds of people a strange belief that he was possessed by a ghost.

3. An exorcist invited a Chanda

That thought had crossed the mind of the simple-hearted Chandradevi also. Now when she heard others talking in the same strain, she resolved to call an exorcist for the good of her son. The Master used to say, "One day an exorcist came, burnt a wick sanctified by Mantras, and made me smell it; he said, 'If it is a ghost it will flee'; but it was of no avail. Afterwards worship and other ceremonies were performed with the help of a few famous exorcists and a Chanda was invited. The Chanda accepted the worship and offerings, became pleased and said to the exorcists, 'Neither has he been possessed by a ghost nor is he suffering from any disease.' The Chanda then addressed me in the presence of all and said, 'O Gadai, you want to be a Sadhu, why then do you take so much of betel-nut? Don't you know that it increases lust?' Indeed I liked betel-nut very much and used to take it very often; however, I gave it up at the Chanda's word."

4. The opinion of the Master's relatives. What led to his normality

Then the Master was about to complete his twenty-third year. To a great extent, he regained the normal state of his health during his stay at Kamarpukur. There must have been some particular reason for his regaining his normal health and the ceasing of his piteous crying. That he could now be at peace was surely due to the repeated visions of the divine Mother. We are firmly convinced of it from what we have heard about his state at that time from his relatives. We shall now narrate their account.

All alone, he spent a good part of his time in the two fearful solitary crematoriums named Bhutirkhal and Budhui-moral, in the western and the

north-eastern borders of Kamarpukur, respectively. Now his relatives came to know of the occasional manifestation of extraordinary powers in him. The Master, we were told, went out from home with a new pot full of sweets and other eatables in order to offer them to the jackals and the demigods that lived there. When those eatables were offered as oblation to them, the pot, the Master told them, would go up in the air and vanish into the void and he could sometimes see those demigods with his own eyes. When his second brother Rameswar found that he did not return home even after midnight, he would go towards those places and loudly call his brother by name. The Master would hear him and reply in a loud voice, "Yes, brother. I am coming. Don't proceed any farther this side, the demigods might harm you." During this period the Master planted a seedling of a Vilva tree with his own hand in the Bhutirkhal crematorium. He used to sit under the old peepul tree that was there and meditate and perform Japa for long periods of time. From what the relatives of the Master told us, it appears that the painful want that he had been experiencing, the want of the vision of the divine Mother, was now removed by some extraordinary spiritual visions and experiences. When we study this period of his life it seems to us that he was now having constant visions of the divine Mother's form—the Mother extremely gracious to the Sadhakas, consisting of pure consciousness, holding in two of Her hands a sword and a severed head and stretching out the other two hands in gestures of offering boons and absolute fearlessness. He was now moulding his life according to Her directions received in response to his questions. He had, it seems, the firm conviction since then, that he would soon have the unique fortune of having the divine Mother's eternal beatific vision.

5. An instance of the Master's Yogic powers

We have heard not only of the Master's being engaged in such rites and ceremonies as feeding jackals and demigods but also of his practising Yoga as a result of which he developed prophetic powers. Hriday and many people of Kamarpukur and Jayaramvati attested to it and we heard the same from the Master himself.

6. On finding him normal, the Master's relatives decided to get him married

By now the Master's mother and other members of the household had learnt that, by the grace of Providence, the disease which he was suffering from had abated to a great extent. For they noticed that he did not now cry piteously as before, and took food at the proper time, and that all his other actions and behaviour were just like those of ordinary persons. But the facts that he used to go very often to the burning grounds and sit for worship and meditation putting off his cloth without any sense of shame and that he would get annoyed at the interference with his prayer and meditation, and spend most of his time with gods and goddesses to the utter disregard of others' words—all these were to be regarded as his natural inclinations from his childhood, and not as something unusual, due to insanity.

Still they saw with great apprehension that the Master was completely indifferent to worldly affairs and that there was an uninterrupted inwardness about his personality. The fear that there was a great possibility of a relapse as long as he did not pay attention to the daily worldly concerns in a natural way and did not give up his indifference, arose in their minds over and over again and threw them even now into a gulf of anxiety. The Master's affectionate mother and elder brother were now very often busy in inventing various means of saving him from a relapse into that state. At last after a good deal of thinking and consultation, the mother and the son decided to get the Master married; and, therefore, an urgency was felt for finding a suitable bride. For they thought that the Master's mind would not roam about in high spiritual regions if he began to love a good-natured wife coming of a noble family. Although he was now in the prime of his youth, he was dependent in all respects on his mother and brother, and was the same guileless boy as ever. The slightest effort or endeavour for improving his own worldly affairs was not perceptible in him. How could it be forthcoming unless the responsibility of maintaining his wife and children rested on his shoulders?

The bride had to be brought into the bridegroom's family only after paying a marriage portion according to the custom of that part of the country. Had they the means to pay so much money as the marriage portion

of a girl of ten or eleven would require? They hesitated, and had not married off Gadadhar till then, only because money could not be gathered on account of various mishaps in the family. Had he been married long before to a girl of five, she would have grown up by this time to attract her husband's mind and could have taken upon herself much of the management of the family. In any case what was destined to happen had happened; there should be no more delay. So they sought for a bride all round.

7. The reason why the Master consented to marry

However secretly the consultation between the mother and the elder son took place, the clever Master came to know of it very soon. But he did not raise any consented to objection when the proposal of marriage was made; rather, he behaved like a child who makes merry and feels happy on festive occasions in the family. Was it because he got an affirmative reply to this question from the Mother Universal that he was in such a mood of merriment? Or was it due to his boyish lack of thinking and foresight? No doubt, people in general would point out the latter as the reason, but we have discussed the topic elsewhere[1] and have reasons to differ.

8. The Master selected his bride

People were sent on errands to the surrounding villages, but nowhere could a suitable bride be found. Rameswar, the elder brother of the Master, did not venture to settle the marriage with any one of the few available girls because their parents demanded a marriage portion too high for him to pay. His friends of the village also did not advise him to settle the marriage by paying such a large sum. Chandradevi, however, became very anxious. For, she was going to get Gadadhar married for his future good and not just for removing her own mental depression—into which she was thrown at the death of her godlike husband and of her first son Ramkumar—by participating in the unalloyed joy of her pet Gadai's marriage. Therefore she could not rest satisfied with merely thinking that a bride was not available. A vigorous search was made again. As no bride was available in spite of

this search, the Master's mother and brother became extremely worried, when one day the Master suddenly went into Bhavasamadhi and said, "It is useless to search here and there; go and search in the family of Ram Mukhopadhyaya of the village of Jayaramvati; the bride has been marked with a straw[1] and kept reserved there."

9. The marriage

Although they could not immediately have faith in those words of the Master, his mother and brother sent a man there to make an enquiry. He brought the news that, other things apart, the bride-to-be was too young, just a little more than five years. As no other bride was available anywhere else and this girl was found in such an unexpected way, the Master's mother had no alternative but to agree to Gadadhar's marriage with that girl. Everything was settled by a few days' negotiation. Afterwards an auspicious day and an auspicious moment were looked up in the almanac. Then Rameswar went with his brother to the village of Jayaramvati, four miles west of Kamarpukur, and had the auspicious marriage ceremony performed with the five-year-old, only daughter of Ramchandra Mukhopadhyaya, and returned home. A marriage portion of three hundred rupees had to be paid. It was the month of May, 1859 and the Master had reached his twenty-fourth year.

10. The conduct of Chandramani and of the Master after the marriage

Chandramani, it is evident, was free from anxiety to a great extent after Gadadhar's marriage. When she found that her son obeyed all her injunctions regarding marriage as well as those regarding other matters, she thought that Providence was now propitious after all. For, would all things have come to pass so well, had He not been favourable? The listless son had returned home, a bride of noble descent had graced her family, want of money had also been removed providentially and Gadai had entered the life of the world! So, how could it be said that Providence was not favourable? Therefore the virtuous, simple-hearted Chandradevi became somewhat happy now. But she, we can clearly understand, became greatly distressed at

the thought of the poverty of her family a few days afterwards. In order to please the bride's father and to keep up appearances, the bridal ornaments had been borrowed from the Lahas, their landlord friends, to adorn the bride with on the day of the wedding. From the marriage day, Chandradevi, by lavishing her love on the bride, made her new daughter-in-law more than her own daughter so that Gadadhar might love her very dearly. Now that the time for returning those ornaments had come, the eyes of the old lady were filled with tears to think that she should muster the sternness to take off the ornaments from the girl's person. She, however, did not express the anguish of her heart to anyone, but it did not take long for Gadadhar to understand it. He pacified his mother with a few words and took off the ornaments from the person of his sleeping wife so deftly that she could not know it at all. The ornaments were immediately sent back to the Lahas. But the matter did not end there. The intelligent girl, when she woke up, said, "Where are those ornaments I had on?" With tears Chandradevi took the girl on her lap and said by way of consoling her, "My child, Gadadhar will give you afterwards many ornaments better than those." The bride's uncle came that day to see her and when he came to know this, he expressed great displeasure and took her away. Chandradevi was once more rudely shocked. But very soon the Master removed that pain of hers by his playfulness and jocular remarks, such as, "Let them say or do whatever they like; the marriage cannot be annulled now."

11. The Master returned to Calcutta

After his marriage, the Master spent about one year and seven months at Kamarpukur. His mother had him with her after a very long time and did not easily give him permission to return to Calcutta. She did not soon allow him to return lest he should have a relapse of that insanity. Anyway he stayed on and, according to the custom of the family, went to his father-in-law's house for a few days and returned on an auspicious day to Kamarpukur together with his wife, who, by now, had reached her seventh year.

Now he resolved to return to Calcutta shortly after his "coming in a pair", as it was called. But for his poverty he would not have had to come to

Calcutta. Although his mother and brother asked him to remain at home for some time more, the poverty in the family was not unknown to him. How then could the affectionate and loving heart of the Master remain free from anxiety, fully knowing as he did, all that? He did not comply with their wish, but returned to Calcutta, to the Kali temple, and took over charge of the divine Mother's service.

12. The Master's divine inebriation for the second time

Scarcely had he performed the worship for a few days when he became so much absorbed in it that everything about Kamarpukur—mother, brother, wife, worldly affairs, want, etc.,—got shut up in a dark secluded corner of his heart. The only idea that occupied the whole of his mind was how he could see the divine Mother in all beings at all times. His chest became reddish again on account of continuous Japa, remembrance of God and reflection and meditation on Him. The world and all talks thereof appeared to him as deadly poison; that terrible burning sensation came on him again; and sleep vanished as it were into air. But as he had experienced such physical and mental states once before, he was not completely overwhelmed by them as before.

We were told by Hriday that on a call from Mathur Babu, Gangaprasad, the reputed Ayurvedic physician of Calcutta, prescribed for the Master medicines like Chaturmukha pills, and Madhyamanarayana and other oils one after another, for the cure of his sleeplessness, excess of the humour of wind, the burning sensation in his body, etc. Although no immediate result was produced by the treatment, Hriday did not lose hope, and occasionally went with the Master to the Calcutta house of the physician for his treatment. One day, the Master said, when he went there with Hriday, Gangaprasad examined him carefully and prescribed new medicines. Then there was with him another physician of eastern Bengal. Attracted by the Master's looks and thinking deeply over his disease, he said, "It appears from the symptoms that he is in a state of divine inebriation. It is not curable by medicine."[1] The Master used to say that it was this physician who, of all, was the first to be able to ascertain the real cause of his physical changes appearing like a disease. But nobody then believed in his words.

Time passed on thus. Mathur Babu and other friends and well-wishers of the Master grew more anxious and went on trying various treatments for his extraordinary disease. But the disease was on the increase and showed no signs of abatement.

13. Chandradevi's Prayopavesana before Siva

Gradually the news reached Kamarpukur. Having no other alternative, Chandradevi undertook a complete fast unto death before Siva for the recovery of her son. Knowing that the "ancient" Siva of Kamarpukur was an "awakened" deity, she went to His temple and lay prostrate without food or drink. Here she got the instruction from the "ancient" Siva that she would have her desire fulfilled if she undertook that vow in the temple of the Siva of Mukundapur, where she went and undertook the fast again. Although she knew that nobody used to undertake such fast in that temple before, the old lady had full faith in the divine instruction and undertook the fast. Hardly had two or three days passed when she dreamt that Siva, the great God, more silvery in complexion than silver itself, bedecked with glowing matted hair and clad in a tiger skin, appeared before her and consoled her saying, "Don't be afraid; your son is not mad; he is in that state on account of a tremendous awakening of the divine spirit in him." Thus assured through divine intimation, the virtuous old lady offered worship to the great God with her heart purified by devotion and, returning home, began to serve Sitala and Raghuvir with undivided attention for her son's mental peace. Many men and women, we were told, have since then been undertaking fasts in the temple of the Siva at Mukundapur and getting their desires fulfilled.

14. The state in which the Master was at that time

Remembering the happenings of that time, the Master said to us now and again: "Far from such a state being fully produced in ordinary peoples' bodies and minds, one fourth of such changes is enough to bring their lives to an end. I remained occupied with some vision or other of the Mother during the greater part of the day and night; that saved the situation;

otherwise it would have been impossible for this sheath (showing his body) to survive. I had no sleep at all for six long years. The eyes lost the power of winking; I could not close the eyes in spite of all my efforts. I had no idea of the passing of time and was not at all conscious of the body; When the attention turned from Mother to the body, even if a little, I felt apprehensive, thinking, 'Am I on the verge of insanity?' I stood before a mirror and put my finger into my eyes to see whether the eyelids closed; I found the eyelids were even then equally incapable of winking; 1 became alarmed and wept complaining to Mother, 'Mother, is this the result of calling on Thee? Is it the result of my absolute reliance on Thee that Thou hast given this terrible disease to this body?' And the next moment I said, 'Let anything happen to this. Let the body go, if it is to do so; but see that Thou dost not forsake me. Do reveal Thyself to me and bestow Thy grace on me; for, Mother, I have utterly taken refuge at Thy lotus feet and have absolutely no support except Thee,' I used to weep thus for some time, when my mind would again be filled with extraordinary ecstasy. The body appeared to be a trifling thing—something unworthy of attention. Then I was blessed with Her vision and consoled by Her words assuring freedom from fear."

15. Mathur saw the Master as Siva and Kali.

Again it was during this time that one day Mathur was astonished and dumbfounded on having an unsolicited vision of a wonderful divine manifestation in the Master by the inscrutable decree of the Mother of the universe. We have described elsewhere[1] how he had that vision of the forms of Siva and Kali in the Master and offered his heartfelt worship to him as the veritable God. He was compelled to view the Master with a different eye since that day and to have devotion to and faith in him. When we see such an impossible event happen, it is brought home to us that the divine Mother, the Will of all wills, thus bound up both of them inseparably with the cord of love because Mathur's help and service during the following period of the Master's life of Sadhana would be indispensable. One is wonder-struck to find from such events, proofs of how much care the divine Mother took and what wonderful means She employed, in order to make the

Master’s body and mind fit instruments for stemming the decline of religion in, and infusing a new spiritual vigour into, the modern world overpowered by agnosticism, atheism and materialism.

Footnote

1. III.4.

1. III.4.

1. Some say, it was Gangaprasad's brother Durgaprasad, who saw the Master and said so.

1. III. 6.

CHAPTER X
THE COMING OF THE BHAIRAVI BRAHMANI

The Master after his marriage returned from Kamarpukur to Dakshineswar. After this, in 1861, two important events took place which exercised a profound influence on his life. This is why it is necessary to describe them here.

1. Severe illness of Rani Rasmani

Rani Rasmani had an attack of dysentery shortly after the Master's arrival at Dakshineswar. Some of us were told by him that one day the Rani had a sudden fall, which gave rise to fever, pain in the body, indigestion, and other complications gradually leading to dysentery. The disease by degrees took a fatal turn.

2. Rani's execution of a Devottara deed of the Dinajpur properties and her death

The Rani, of innumerable noble qualities, had consecrated the Kali temple on Thursday, May 31, 1855, and for the perpetual continuation of the service of the deities, she had purchased on August 29 of the same year, three estates in the district of Dinajpur for two hundred and twenty-six thousand rupees.[1] Although she had resolved in her mind to make an endowment of the property, she had not so far executed a deed of endowment formally. Seeing that the hour of death was fast approaching, she became very anxious to do it. Of the four daughters of the Rani, the second and the third, Kumari and Karunamayi respectively, died before the consecration of the Kali temple. Therefore, her two other daughters, the

eldest Padmamani and the youngest Jagadamba, were present at her sick-bed. We were told that when the draft of the deed of endowment of the Kali temple, written according to the Rani's desire, came, she asked her two daughters to sign it giving their assent to the terms of the deed, thereby precluding all possibilities of future quarrels among her descendants regarding the object of the deed. Jagadamba signed that bond; but Padmamani did not, in spite of the repeated requests of the Rani at the time of her death. Therefore the Rani had no peace on her death-bed. As there was no other alternative left, the Rani signed[1] the deed of endowment herself on February 18, 1861, thinking, "The divine Mother's will be done," and passed away to "the sphere of the Devi" the following night.

3. The Rani's vision at the time of passing away

The Master said that Rani Rasmani came to her house on the Adiganga at Kalighat a few days before she passed away. Immediately before her passing away, she saw many lamps lighted before her and exclaimed suddenly, "Do move away all these; I relish them no more. My Mother (the Mother of the universe) is come now; all quarters have become illumined by the effulgence of Her holy person. (A little later) Mother, art thou come? But Padma has not affixed her signature; what will happen, Mother?" Saying so, the virtuous Rani assumed a calm and tranquil mood and immediately slept on the Mother's lap the sleep that knows no waking. She had already been brought to the sands of the Ganga and the loud howling[1] of jackals was being heard on all sides near by.

4. What the Rani apprehended on her death-bed is about to happen.

From the great disagreement, and the subsequent quarrel and litigation that have been going on among the sons of the Rani's daughters over the endowed temple property, we see clearly why the far-sighted Rani was so apprehensive at the time of her death regarding the arrangement for the service of the Devi, which was her very life, and why she felt the anguish from that cause far more acutely than the pain due to the fatal disease. It is seen in the official documents that the temple property is now mortgaged

for a little less than one lakh of rupees,[2] for defraying the heavy expenses of its litigation. Who can say whether the unique, praise-worthy act of the Rani connected with the divine dedication will end some time, as the result of these quarrels, as a mere memory and be obliterated altogether?

5. Improvement in the worldly affairs of Mathur Babu and his arrangement about the divine service in the temple

Since the foundation of the Kali temple at Dakshineswar, Mathuranath Biswas, the youngest son-in-law of the Rani, rose to be her right-hand man in managing the estate. From the very day the Kali temple was consecrated, he having studied the financial condition of the endowment, made arrangements about all matters regarding the temple service according to the Rani's desire. Therefore, it was he who continued managing it after the Rani's death. As the purifying influence of the life of Sri Ramakrishna had gained a complete hold over the mind of Mathur some time previously, the service of the Mother at Dakshineswar did not evidently slacken in any department after the Rani's death.

6. The influence and prosperity of Mathur were for helping the Master

We have told the reader many times of the unique relation of Mathur with the Master. Therefore, it is needless to mention it again. Suffice it to say that the sudden death of the Rani and Mathur's wielding of the sole authority in the management of the temple affairs gave the latter a great opportunity of helping the Master in his Tantric Sadhanas extending over a long time. Who can say whether this authority of Mathur over the management of the property was not brought about by the will of the divine Mother for helping Her son, the Master? For, we find that from that time on till his death, Mathur engaged himself whole-heartedly in the service of the Master. To have that firm faith in one person for more than eleven long years and to spend one's life in an exalted spiritual mood are possible by the grace of God alone. One is convinced of the great good fortune of Mathur from the fact that he was daily growing in his faith in the Master, instead of giving

free rein to passions and losing his head on the acquisition of almost the sole mastery over the vast property of the Rani.

7. The idea of Mathur and others about the Master

So far none but the Sadhakas of God could form any idea about the high spiritual state of the Master. The generality of people thought he was demented. For, he, they said, did not at all distinguish what was good for him from what was evil, was not attracted by objects of enjoyment, never tried to do harm to anybody and was living contented within himself, and spent his days repeating sometimes Hari, sometimes Rama and sometimes Kali! They also saw that he could not at all improve his worldly condition, nor would ever be able to do so, even though he was a favourite of the Rani and Mathur Babu —the persons whose favour was enough to make many people improve their fortunes in every respect. But one thing they all understood, namely, that although this madman was hopelessly good-for-nothing, still his bright eyes, his extraordinary deportment, his sweet voice, his graceful speech and wonderful presence of mind had such an attraction and charm for all that he could unhesitatingly approach and endear himself to even those rich and respectable persons before whom others would not venture to appear. Although the people in general and the officers of the Kali temple in particular, formed such a queer idea of the Master, Mathur had quite a different view of him. Hriday told us that Mathur said, “The reason why he looks like a madman is that he has had the grace of the Mother of all.”

8. The arrival of the Brahmani at Dakshineswar

Shortly after the passing away of the Rani there came to pass another important event in the Master’s life. There was a beautiful flower garden on the spacious embankment on the Ganga, to the west of the Kali temple, full of various kinds of flowers; the trees and creepers in the garden, well taken care of, spread a wonderful beauty and filled the quarters with the fragrance of the flowers. Though the Master did not perform the worship of the divine Mother at that time, he used to pluck flowers daily in that garden, make

garlands with them and decorate Her with his own hands. Even today there exist, in the middle of the garden, a wide flight of steps leading from the Ganga to the temple, through a beautiful open portico, and a brick-built Ghat for the use of women at the northern end of the embankment, and a Nahavat to the north of the Kali temple. People used to call that Ghat the Vakul-ghat on account of a big spreading Vakul tree close to it.

One day the Master was plucking flowers in that garden when a boat came to the Vakul-ghat and anchored. A beautiful lady in the dress of a Bhairavi, with ochrecoloured cloth on and with her hair let loose, got down with a bundle of books in her hand and proceeded towards the portico on the wide Ghat to the south. Although the Bhairavi was past her youth, nobody could take her to be advanced in age, because youthful grace and beauty still lingered on her person. We were told by the Master himself that the Bhairavi was then almost forty. We cannot say how far the Master foresaw at first sight his close future relation with her. But it is true that he felt that great attraction towards her, which people feel when they see one whose life is bound up with their own. For, as soon as the Master saw the Bhairavi from a distance, he returned to his room, called Hriday and asked him to fetch the Sannyasini. Hriday hesitated and said, “The lady is a stranger. Why should she come at all?” The Master said, “Request her in my name and she will come readily.” Hriday said that he felt not a little surprised to see the eagerness of the Master to speak with a lady who was entirely unknown to him, for he had never before seen him acting thus.

However, Hriday knew that he could not but obey his mad uncle. So he went to the portico, saw the Bhairavi sitting there and said to her that his maternal uncle, who was a devotee of God, requested her to meet him. Hriday was still further amazed when he saw the Bhairavi unhesitatingly standing up to accompany him without putting any question to him.

9. What the Bhairavi said to the Master when she saw him first

When the Bhairavi came to the Master’s room and saw him, she became overwhelmed with delight and astonishment, shed tears of joy and said, “Ah, my child, you are here! I knew you were living somewhere on the bank of the Ganga, and I have been searching for you ever so long; at long

last I have met you now." The Master said to her, "How could you know of me, mother?" The Bhairavi answered, "I knew long ago by the grace of the universal Mother that I would have to meet three of you. I have already met two in eastern Bengal and today I meet you here."

10. The first conversation between the Master and the Bhairavi

The Master then sat beside the Bhairavi and, like a child describing everything delightedly and with an open heart to its mother, went on narrating his extraordinary visions—the loss of his consciousness of the external world while talking on God, the burning sensation in his body, his sleeplessness, and other peculiar bodily changes, because of which he was taken to be mad. He repeatedly asked her, "Mother, what are these things that happen to me? Have I actually become mad? Have I been seized with a fell disease for calling on Mother wholeheartedly?" Listening to these words of the Master, she, like a mother, became now excited, now delighted, and with her heart melting with compassion, consoled him saying over and over again, "Who calls you mad, my child? It is not madness; you are in the state of Mahabhava and that is why all these things are happening to you. Is it given to ordinary people to understand the state you are in? In their ignorance they say what they say. All this happened to Sri Radharani and to Sri Chaitanya, the great lord. All these things are recorded in the devotional scriptures. I have got these books with me. I'll read them out to you and prove that these states came on those who truly called on God in the past and do so at the present time too." Hriday was simply flabbergasted to see the Bhairavi Brahmani and his uncle behave and converse with each other like close relatives, long familiar.

When afterwards the Master found that the day was far advanced, he gave the Bhairavi Brahmani, for her breakfast, fruits, roots, butter, candy, etc., all Prasada of the Devi; and knowing that the Brahmani, inspired by spiritual motherly love towards him, would not take anything whatever without first feeding him, he first partook a little of all those things. After paying her obeisance to the deities and having her breakfast, she took from the temple stores some flour, rice, etc., as Bhiksha in order to offer cooked

food to the stone symbol of Raghuvir hung from her neck, and engaged herself in cooking under the Panchavati.

11. The Bhairavi had an extraordinary vision under the Panchavati

Afterwards, when the cooking was finished, she placed food, drink, etc., before Raghuvir and offered them to Him. Then she, while thinking on her chosen Ideal, sank into deep meditation, had an extraordinary vision, and entered into deep Samadhi. From both her eyes flowed profuse tears of love and she completely lost her consciousness of the world. Feeling in his heart of hearts irresistibly attracted to the Panchavati at that time, the Master came there in a state of ecstasy, and not knowing clearly what he was doing, started like one hypnotized, eating the food offered by the Brahmani to her chosen Ideal. The Brahmani regained her normal consciousness after some time and opened her eyes to see that charming behaviour of the Master who was then in Bhavasamadhi and was devoid of consciousness of the world. Finding all this correspond to her vision, she was filled with bliss and astonishment, the hair of her body standing on end. Coming down to normal consciousness, the Master felt uneasy at what he had done, and said to the Brahmani, “Who knows, mother, why I lose control over myself and happen to do such things?” The Brahmani then reassured him like a mother and said, “You have done very well, my child; it is not you who have done this but the One who is within you has done it as He does always. From what I saw during my meditation, I have come to the certain conclusion as to who has done it, and I feel I need not perform ceremonial worship any more; my worship at long last has answered its purpose.” Saying so, the Brahmani ate without the least hesitation, as Prasada of the Deity, the remains of the food taken by the Master. And, having obtained the permanent living vision of Raghuvir in the body and mind of the Master, she immersed with care the stone symbol of Raghuvir, worshipped so endearingly by her for such a long time, in the waters of the Ganga, shedding tears of love and joy in a spiritual semi-conscious state.

12. The discussion on the Sastras under the Panchavati

The affection and attraction at first sight between the Master and the Brahmani increased day by day. With her heart overcome by spiritual maternal affection, the Sannyasini stayed on at Dakshineswar. Neither of the two was conscious of how time slipped away day after day in their meeting each other and having spiritual conversation under the Panchavati. The Master told the Brahmani frankly all the mysteries regarding his spiritual visions and states, now and then putting various questions to her. And the Bhairavi Brahmani solved all those problems with the help of books on Tantra. Sometimes, again, she would read verses from the *Chaitanya Bhagavata,* the *Chaitanya Charitamrita* and other devotional books showing what signs were produced by the strong surge of the divine love in the bodies and minds of incarnations of God, and in this way dispelled the doubts of the Master. Thus there flowed a current of divine bliss under the Panchavati.

13. The reason why the Bhairavi came to live at the Devamandal Ghat

Six or seven days passed this way, when it became evident to the keen intelligence of the Master that it did not look well to keep the Brahmani there, though there was nothing really blamable in it. Unable to understand their holy relationship worldly men, given to lust and gold, might start talking ill about the character of the pure lady. As soon as the thought crossed his mind, he gave a hint about it to the Brahmani. The Brahmani also felt the reasonableness of the point and left the Kali temple, deciding to live somewhere near and to come daily for some time to see the Master.

To the north of the temple in the village of Dakshineswar, on the Ganga, is situated the Devamandal Ghat. Here the Brahmani went and dwelt.[1] She roamed everywhere in the village and became dear to the ladies there by virtue of her noble qualities. Therefore, she had no inconvenience whatever about her board and lodge and was not prevented from meeting the Master daily out of any fear of public scandal. She used to visit the Kali temple every day for some time and have conversation with him as before. She gathered by begging various kinds of food from the women of the village who became acquainted with her, brought them to the temple and gave them to the Master to eat.[2]

14. How the Bhairavi came to have the conviction that the Master was an incarnation of God

When she heard of the spiritual experiences, visions and states of the Master, the Brahmani gained the firm conviction that all those things were produced by his extraordinary love of God. When she saw that he felt supreme bliss during the singing of the Lord's glory and often lost consciousness in Bhavasamadhi during conversation on God, she became certain that he was not an ordinary Sadhaka. When she saw all these she was reminded time and again of the hints spread over the pages of the *Chaitanya Charitamrita,* the *Chaitanya Bhagavata* and other books of Bengal Vaishnavism, about the fact that Chaitanya, the great lord, would again assume a body and come down on earth for the deliverance of men. The Brahmani, the great scholar that she was, compared minutely the conduct and behaviour of the Master with those of Chaitanya recorded in those books and found a great similarity between them. She found manifested in the Master, as in Chaitanya, the power of awakening spirituality in others by touch during Bhavasamadhi. Again, garlands, sandal-paste, etc., recorded to have cured the constant burning sensation in the body of Chaitanya suffering from the pangs of separation from God, were applied by her to the Master also for the same purpose and with the same effect.[1] Therefore, the memory of the divine vision regarding Sri Ramakrishna which the Brahmani had under the Panchavati on the first day of her arrival, as well as the few facts just mentioned above deeply convinced her that both Chaitanya and Nityananda had come again in the present age and dwelt in the Master's body and mind with a view to disseminating love of God for the deliverance of Jivas. While going to the village of Sihar, the Master, we have already told the reader, saw two boys of tender age come out of his body. The Brahmani now heard of that vision from the Master himself and became all the more convinced of her own conclusion regarding him and said, "Chaitanya is manifesting this time in the 'sheath' of Nityananda."

The Sannyasini Brahmani did not expect any favour from anybody in the world; so she was not afraid of being condemned or ridiculed if her own conclusion regarding Sri Ramakrishna were spoken out to others. Therefore,

when asked about it, she had no hesitation in fully expressing her view first to the Master and Hriday and then to all others. One day at this time the Master, we were told, sat under the Panchavati with Mathur and Hriday. In the course of conversation, the Master told Mathur about the Brahmani's faith regarding himself and said, "She says the signs that were manifest in the incarnations of God are there in this body and mind.[1] She has read many scriptures and has also many books with her." When Mathur heard this, he laughed out and said, "Father, let her say whatever she likes; the incarnations of God cannot be more than ten. Therefore,, how can her words be true? But it is true that the Mother Kali has bestowed Her grace on you."

They were talking thus when they saw a Sannyasini coming towards them. Mathur asked the Master, "Is it she? " The Master replied, "Yes." They saw that she had procured a plateful of sweets from somewhere and in a state of rare inwardness, oblivious, so to say, of the outside world, was coming towards them inspired by the same mood which prompted Yasoda, the wife of Nanda, to proceed with affection oozing out of her heart to feed Gopala at Vrindavan. When she approached them, she saw Mathur Babu and carefully restrained herself and handed over the plate to Hriday to be given to the Master to eat from. Pointing to Mathur, the Master then said to her, "Mother, I was telling him what you said about me, to which he replied that the incarnations of God could not be more than ten. Mathur saluted the Sannyasini in the meantime and admitted that he had actually raised the objection. The Brahmani gave her blessings to him and replied, "Why? Does not the *Bhagavata* speak at first of twenty-four principal incarnations and, afterwards, of innumerable ones? Besides the coming again of the great lord (Sri Chaitanya) is distinctly mentioned in the Vaishnava books, and a great similarity of the principal characteristics is found to exist between him and Sri Chaitanya." The Brahmani thus supported her own position and said that if a good scholar of the *Bhagavata* and books of the Bengal Vaishnava teachers be consulted, he could not but admit the truth of what she said. She was ready, she said, to support her position in the presence of a scholar. Not knowing what he should say, Mathur remained silent.

15. The reason why Pandit Vaishnavacharan came to Dakshineswer

All people, big and small, of the Kali temple came gradually to know of the extraordinary conviction of the Brahmani regarding the Master. This caused a great flutter among them. We have recorded elsewhere the result of this sensation in detail.[1] Therefore, it will suffice here to mention that although the Brahmani raised the Master suddenly to the position of God and paid him the reverence due to God in the presence of all, he remained the same simple child of the divine Mother untouched by egotism and the resulting changes. But he wanted to know the opinions of persons well versed in the Sastras on the Brahmani's conclusion and insisted like a boy that Mathur should invite the Pandits to Dakshineswar. As a result of this request, Pandit Vaishnavacharan came to the Kali temple. We have described elsewhere[2] how the Brahmani, when she met Vishnavacharan, not only upheld her own position but also brought him round to hers.

Footnote

1 Plaint in High Court Suit No. 308 of 1872 Puddomoni Dasee *vs.* Jagadamba Dasee, recites the following from the Deed of Endowment executed by Rani Rasmani: "According to my late husband's desire . . . I on the 18th Jaistha 1262 B.S. (31st May 1855) established and consecrated the Thakurs . . . and for purpose of carrying on the seva purchased three lots of Zemindaries in District Dinajpur on 14th Bhadra 1262 B.S. (29th August 1855) for Rs. 2,26,000."

1. The deed of Endowment dated 18th February 1861 was executed by Rani Rasmani; she acknowledged her execution of the same before J. F. Watkins, Solicitor, Calcutta. This dedication was accepted as valid by all parties in Alipore Suit No. 47 of 186.7, Jadu Nath Chowdhury *vs.* Puddomoni and in the High Court Suit No. 308 of 187*2, Puddomoni *vs.* Jagadamba and also when that suit (No. 308) was revived after, contest on 19th July 1888.

1. The Devi is represented as being surrounded by jackals. So the howling of jackals is considered a good omen.—Tr.

2. Debt due on mortgage by the Estate is Rs. 50,000; interest payable quarterly is Rs. 876-0-0; costs of the Referee already stated amount to Rs. 20,000, as yet untaxed.

1. Hriday said, “The Master himself advised the Brahmani to live at the Devamandal Ghat. He sent her to the Mandal’s place. As soon as she went there, she- was received respectfully by the virtuous wife of the late Navinchandra Niyogi. This pious lady not only allowed her to live in the room at the Ghat as long as she liked but also gave her a bedstead, a maund of rice, pulses, ghee and other articles of food.”

2. III. 8.

1. IV.1.

1. III. 5, 6; IV. 1.

2. IV. 1.

CHAPTER XI
TANTRIC SADHANA

1. The divine insight produced by Sadhana made the Brahmani understand truly the state of the Master

The Brahmani did not arrive at the above conclusion about the uncommon nature of the Master through reason and inference only. The reader may remember that she told the Master during her first meeting with him that she was to meet three persons, Sri Ramakrishna and two others, and help them in developing their spiritual life. She had that command from the Mother of the universe long before she had the privilege of meeting the Master. It is therefore clear that her divine insight produced by spiritual practices, brought her to Dakshineswar and helped her in understanding the Master. As time passed since her first meeting with the Master and as she became more and more closely associated with him, the clearer did it appear to her how far and in what way she was to render him assistance in his Sadhana. Therefore, she did not now spend her time in merely removing the erroneous conception of the people about him, but also engaged the Master in performing various disciplines according to the strict injunctions of the scriptures, so that he might have the perfect vision of the universal Mother and, endowed with Her infinite grace and favour, might become firmly established in his own divine power, that is, in his real nature.

2. The reason why the Brahmani asked the Master to undertake Tantric Sadhana

When the Brahmani, herself an advanced aspirant, saw the Master and talked with him, it did not take her long to understand that the Master could not free himself from doubts regarding his own condition, because he had

proceeded so far to attain the divine Mother's vision with the help, of his extraordinary devotion only, instead of strictly following the traditional paths of spiritual teachers. Therefore, the doubt was crossing his mind now and then whether his visions of the divine Mother were the results of a derangement of brain and whether his extraordinary physical and mental changes were the symptoms of a virulent disease. The Brahmani reflected on what has been mentioned before and induced the Master to follow the path of discipline prescribed in the Tantras. As soon as the Master followed the path of discipline trod by previous Sadhakas, and had experience of the spiritual states similar to those experienced by them, she knew, he would understand that those states of his were not produced by any disease. When he saw it already recorded in the Tantras that particular results were produced by the performance of particular rites, and when he himself obtained those results through the practice of those rites, he would gain a firm conviction that through discipline man had uncommon experiences by ascending to higher and higher planes of consciousness in the internal realm, and that his own physical and mental states had been produced in that way only. The result would be that, whatever uncommon experiences he might have in future, he would know them all as true, and proceed towards his goal without being at all troubled by them. The Brahmani knew that the scriptures, therefore, advised the aspirant always to compare the experiences of his own life with the words of the Guru and the Sastras and see whether they tallied or not.

3. Why the Brahmani helped the Master in his Sadhana, even though she knew that he was an incarnation of God

Why did the Brahmani, it may be asked, engage herself in making the Master practise these disciplines, though she knew that he was an incarnation of God? Does not one who understands the glory of the incarnations of God accept the conclusion that they are perfect, and that disciplines are altogether unnecessary for them? Had the Brahmani, it may be said in reply, been conscious at all times of that glory of the Master, she would have entertained that mental attitude; but that was not the case. We have already said that the Brahmani felt from the very first meeting a

maternal affection for the Master. There is nothing on earth more powerful than love to obliterate in one the consciousness of power in the object of one's love and to impel one to do what one considers good for him. There is no doubt, therefore, that moved by a genuine affection for him she induced the Master to undertake spiritual practices. We come across the same thing in the lives of all god-men, the incarnations. Although the persons intimately related to such men are sometimes overawed by their knowledge of the extraordinary spiritual powers in them, they, it is seen, forget all about it the next moment, and, charmed with the attraction of their love, feel content with merely offering their heart's love to them and seeking their welfare. Similarly, the Brahmani, amazed time after time at the extraordinary ecstasies and the manifestation of powers in the Master, forgot them as quickly and as often, blinded, so to say, by maternal love. It is needless to say that the Master's genuine filial affection for her and his absolute dependence on and faith in her played no small part in raising waves of tender, though austere, maternal affection in the Sannyasini's heart and made her oblivious of his powers, thus impelling her to undergo endless troubles for making the Master happy even to the slightest degree, and protecting him from others' tyranny and helping him in his Sadhana.

4. The Brahmani was eager to make the Master experience all the results of the austerity practised by her

When there is an opportunity of teaching an exceptionally brilliant pupil, there naturally arises in the Guru's heart a supreme contentment, and self-satisfaction. The Brahmani had never even dreamt that in the spiritual world such an excellent and very competent person as the Master could be born at the present time. Therefore we can very well infer that a wonderful joy filled her heart when she got the opportunity of teaching the Master. It was no wonder, therefore, that she was eager to make the Master experience in a very short time all the results of her study and austerity.

5. The Master undertook Tantric discipline with the permission of the divine Mother. The measure of his eagerness for this discipline.

We sometimes heard from the Master himself that he had asked the divine Mother about the propriety and necessity of the disciplines according to the Tantras before he began to practise them, and that he undertook them with Her permission. It was, therefore, not merely the eagerness and inducement of the Brahmani that engaged him in those spiritual exercises, but also the divine insight born of sadhana that made him feel in his heart of hearts that the opportunity of attaining the immediate knowledge of the divine Mother by resorting to scriptural methods had arrived. Therefore, the concentrated mind of the Master now advanced fast with full eagerness on the path of Sadhana taught by the Brahmani. It is not possible for us, ordinary mortals, to feel the measure and intensity of that eagerness. For, where are that tranquillity and that one-pointedness in our minds, distracted as they are by many things from many directions? Where is that unbounded courage on our part to jump headlong in order to touch the very bottom of the sea of deep consciousness instead of being deluded by the wantonness of its surface waves, the objects of normal consciousness? Where is the power in us to eradicate the attachment to all the things of the world including our own bodies, and to plunge with utter abandon into the depths of spiritual inwardness, to realize which the Master urged us over and over again, saying, “Dive deep down, dive to the depths of yourself.” Overwhelmed with the anguish of his heart, the Master, we were told, rubbed his face against the sandy bank of the Ganga under the Panchavati, saying, “Mother, reveal Thyself;” and was it a matter of a day or two? It went on unabated as days passed by. Those words only enter our ears, but do not rouse corresponding echoes in our hearts at all. And why should it be otherwise? Have we got that childlike all-consuming faith of the Master in the existence of the divine Mother and in the attainment of Her vision by renouncing everything and calling on Her with the eagerness of heart that was his?

6. The Master spoke about his eagerness at the time of Sadhana

One day while living at Kasipur, the Master astonished us by giving us a little indication of the measure and the intensity of his spiritual eagerness at the time of his Sadhana. We cannot say whether we shall be able to give the

reader even a faint picture of what we then felt. However, we shall mention it here.

We were witnessing with our own eyes the intense eagerness of Swami Vivekananda for the realization of God, how the spiritual awakening came on him when he went to deposit the fee for his Law examination; how, goaded to restlessness by it, he ran, oblivious of the world outside, barefooted and with only one piece of cloth on, through the streets of the city to the feet of Sri Guru at Kasipur and, like one mad, laid bare to him the anguish of his heart, and obtained his grace; how, since then he spent his time night and day in Japa, meditation, devotional songs and spiritual study; how on account of his boundless enthusiasm for Sadhana, his usually tender heart turned adamant and remained quite indifferent to the sufferings of his mother and brothers; and how, advancing with single-minded devotion on the path of Sadhana pointed out by his preceptor, he was having vision after vision, culminating at last in his first enjoyment of the bliss of the Nirvikalpa Samadhi in a short period of three or four months. All these things took place before our very eyes and completely struck us dumb. Greatly delighted, the Master used to praise highly the Swami's extraordinary devotion, eagerness and enthusiasm for spiritual practices. One day at that time the Master compared the Swami's love and enthusiasm for Sadhana with his own and said, "Narendra's devotion and enthusiasm are extraordinary indeed, but compared with the urge that came here (pointing to himself) at the time of Sadhana, his is most ordinary. It is not even one fourth of that." Understand, if you can, O reader, with the help of your imagination what feeling arose in our minds at those words of the Master.

Thus the Master took the hint from the universal Mother, forgot everything else and merged himself in Sadhana. And the learned and adroit Brahmani took endless pains to collect from various parts of the country, things specifically necessary for particular rites, and 'gave the Master instructions regarding their application at the time of Sadhana.

7. The construction of the Panchamundi seat and the performance of all the Sadhanas according to the sixty-four Tantras

The skulls[1] of five dead beings, including that of a man, were brought from the parts of the country far away from the Ganga; and two altars[2] propitious for Tantric Sadhanas were constructed, one, under the Vilva tree situated at the northern boundary of the temple garden, and the other, under the Panchavati planted by the Master himself; and sitting on either of these 'skull-seats', according to need, Master spent his time in Japa, meditation, etc. This extraordinary Sadhaka and his guide were not conscious, for a few months, of how days and nights slipped by. The Master used to say,[1] "In the day-time the Brahmani went to various places far away from the temple, garden and collected and brought various rare articles prescribed by the Tantras. Placing them under the Vilva tree or under the Panchavati at night, she called me, taught me how to make use of those things, and helped me in the performance of the worship of the divine Mother according to the prescribed rules with their aid, asking me at last to merge in Japa and meditation. I acted accordingly. But I had to perform almost no Japa; for, hardly did I turn the rosary once when I merged completely in Samadhi and realized the results proper to those rites. There was thus no limit to my visions and experiences, all very extraordinary. The Brahmani made me undertake, one by one, all the disciplines prescribed in the sixty-four main Tantras, all difficult to accomplish, in trying to practise which most of the Sadhakas go astray; but all of which I got through successfully by Mother's grace.

8. Seeing the Goddess in the form of the woman

"On one occasion, I saw, that the Brahmani had brought at night—nobody knew whence—a beautiful woman in the prime of her youth, and said to me, 'My child, worship her as the Devi.' When the worship was finished, she said, 'Sit on her lap, my child, and perform Japa.' I was seized with fear, wept piteously and said to Mother, 'O Mother, Mother of the universe, what is this command Thou givest to one who has taken absolute refuge in Thee? Has Thy weak child the power to be so impudently daring?' But as soon as I said so, I felt as if I was possessed by some unknown power, and an extraordinary strength filled my heart. And no sooner had I, uttering the Mantras, sat on the lap of the woman, like one hypnotized,

unaware of what I was doing, than I merged completely in Samadhi. When I regained consciousness, I saw the Brahmani waiting on me and assiduously trying to bring me back to normal consciousness. She said, 'The rite is completed, my child; others restrain themselves with very great difficulty under such circumstances and then finish the rite with nominal Japa for a trifling little time only; but you lost all consciousness and were in deep Samadhi.' When I heard this, I became reassured and began to salute Mother again and again with a grateful heart for enabling me to pass that ordeal unscathed.

"On another occasion, I saw that the Brahmani cooked fish in the skull of a dead body and performed Tarpana. She also made me do so and asked me to take that fish. I did as I was asked and felt no aversion whatever.

9. Renunciation of aversion

"But, on the day when the Brahmani brought a piece of rotten flesh and asked me to touch it with my tongue after Tarpana, I was shaken by aversion and said, 'Can it be done?' So questioned, she said, 'What's there in it, my child? Just see, I do it.' Saying so, she put a portion of it into her mouth and said, 'Aversion should not be entertained,' and placed again a little of it before me. When I saw her do so, the idea of the terrible Chandika Form of the Mother Universal was inspired in my mind; and repeatedly uttering 'Mother', I entered into Bhavasamadhi. There was then no aversion felt when the Brahmani put it into my mouth.

10. Other Tantric realizations and the Master's behaviour at the time of Tantric Sadhanas

"Having initiated me thus in Purnabhisheka, the Brahmani made me perform daily Tantric rites too numerous to mention. I now don't remember all things at all times. But I remember the day when I was able by the grace of Mother to view with perfect equanimity, the supreme pleasure of a pair of lovers, seeing nothing in it but the blissful sport of the Divine; the mind instead of descending even to the neighbourhood of ordinary human feelings, soared higher and higher merging at last in deep Samadhi. After

regaining normal consciousness, I heard the Brahmani say, ‘You have reached the desired end of a very difficult Tantric Sadhana and become established in the divine mood. This is the ultimate Sadhana of the (heroic) mode of worship.’

“Shortly afterwards, when I performed the worship of the female figure according to the Tantra rites, I did it with the help of another Bhairavi in the open music hall of the temple in the presence of all, during the day-time. When it was over I saluted her according to Sastric prescription. This was the last rite connected with the heroic mode of worship, which I completed in that manner. Even as my mental attitude towards all women, namely, that of a child towards its mother, remained intact during the long period of the Tantric Sadhana, so also I could never take a drop of wine at that time. The mere mention of the name of Karana[1] (wine) would inspire in me the immediate experience of the universal Cause and I lost myself in it completely. Similarly, as soon as I heard other words of that kind, the Cause of the universe would present Itself before me and I would be in Samadhi.”

11. One story of Ganesh’s filial attitude towards all women

One day while living at Dakshineswar, the Master made mention of his lifelong filial attitude towards all women and told us a story from the Puranas. How firmly the knowledge of filial relation with all women without exception was established in the heart of Ganesh, the chief of the perfected persons of divine knowledge, was described in the story. Before we were told that story, we had no excess of devotion to and reverence for this pot-bellied, elephant-faced god with the exudation flowing from his temples. But, since we heard the story from the Master’s holy mouth, we have the conviction that Ganesh was truly fit to be worshipped before all the gods, as indeed he is worshipped. The story is this:

One day, in his tender age, Ganesh, while playing, saw a cat, which he, in his boyish playfulness and restlessness, beat and tortured in various ways and covered with wounds. The cat escaped somehow with life, and limb. When Ganesh became quiet and came to his mother, he saw to his surprise marks of injury in various parts of the holy person of the Devi. Very much pained to see that condition of his mother, the boy asked her the reason of it.

The Devi answered in a melancholy mood, “You yourself are the cause of this sad condition of mine!” More afflicted than surprised at it, the devoted Ganesh said with tears in his eyes, “How strange! Mother, when did I beat you? And I don’t remember that this child of yours, ignorant as he is, has done any wicked action for which you have to suffer such insults at the hands of anyone.”

Parvati Devi, whose gross external form is the universe, said, “Try to remember if you have beaten any living creature today.” “Yes,” said Ganesh, “I did so; I beat a cat a short time ago.” Ganesh thought that the person to whom the cat belonged, beat his mother that way. Ganesh’s mother took the repentant boy to her bosom and consoled him saying, “It is not so, my child; nobody beat this body of mine; but it is I who have assumed the form of the cat; that is why you see the marks of your beating on my person. You have done so without knowing it; so, don’t be sorry for it; but remember henceforward that all the Jivas of the world having female forms are parts of me and those having male forms are parts of your father. There are no persons or things in the world other than Siva and Sakti.” Ganesh had faith in those words and enshrined them in his heart. When he reached the marriageable age, he did not consent to marry lest he should have to marry his mother. Ganesh thus maintained continence all his life and became foremost among the persons of divine knowledge, inasmuch as he always had the conviction in his heart that the universe was of the nature of Siva and Sakti, Brahman and Its Power.

After narrating the preceding story the Master told the following one, also indicative of the greatness of Ganesh’s knowledge.

12. The story of the circumambulation of the universe by Ganesh and Kartik

Showing once the precious garland of gems hanging from her neck to Ganesh and Kartik, Parvati Devi said to them, “I will give this garland of gems to the one who will circumambulate the universe comprising the fourteen worlds and come back to me first.” Kartik, the commander of the celestial army, having for his vehicle a peacock, smiled a smile of derision thinking of his elder brother’s fat and heavy body and pot-belly, and of the

small power and slow movement of the mouse, his vehicle, and became cocksure that the garland had already become his, and started immediately on the circumambulation of the universe. Long after Kartik had started, the sedate Ganesh left his seat calmly and, seeing with the eye of knowledge the universe consisting of Siva and Sakti, situated in the body of Hara and Parvati, went round them with a gentle gait, worshipped them and took his seat. Long after this Kartik returned, when, pleased with the knowledge and devotion of Ganesh, Parvati Devi placed the garland of gems affectionately round his neck as a token of her grace.

Thus mentioning the greatness of Ganesh's knowledge and his filial relation with all women without exception, the Master said, "My attitude to women is also the same; that is why I had the vision of the maternal form of the universal Cause in my wedded wife and worshipped her and bowed down at her feet."

13. The uniqueness of the Master in his Tantric Sadhana

We have not heard of any other Sadhaka in any age who having kept intact that filial attitude towards all women, had resorted to the Tantric disciplines according to the prescribed rules of the heroic mode of worship. Following this heroic mode the aspirants have all along been taking a woman companion at the time of Sadhana. As they do not see any aspirant of the heroic mode deviate from that practice, people have got a firm conviction that the realization of the desired end of the discipline, that is, the attainment of the grace of the divine Mother, is quite impossible if that practice is not followed. It is doubtless that, under the influence of this conviction, people condemn the Tantra scriptures.

14. That speciality was the intention of the divine Mother

It is only the Master, the incarnation for this epoch, who told us repeatedly that he never in his life kept the company of a woman even in a dream. That the accomplishment of a hidden purpose was the intention of the divine Mother is evident from the fact that She made the Master take up

the filial attitude towards all women from the beginning and engaged him in the discipline according to the heroic mode.

15. What is proved by the Master's attaining success without taking a women

The Master said, "It did not take me more, than three days to succeed in any of the disciplines. When I took up a particular discipline and asked the divine Mother importunately with a glowing eagerness of heart for the realization of its result, She benignly crowned me with success in three days only." It is clearly proved that the company of a woman is not an indispensable auxiliary of those practices, inasmuch as the Master became successful in those disciplines in a very short time without taking a woman. It is by being overcome by his own weak nature, that an aspirant destitute of self-control acts in that way. It is only by way of a concession that the Tantras teach that an aspirant who takes a woman will be established in the divine state in future as the result of his repeated practice of discipline. This assurance of success to them shows only the supremely compassionate nature of the scriptures and not the obligatory character of those rites.

16. The purpose of the Tantric practices

The common aim of all the Tantric practices, it is inferred, is to accustom the aspirant, through self-control and repeated efforts and perseverance, to the conviction that those very objects—sights, tastes, etc., which tempt human beings, make them experience repeated birth and death, and prevent them from attaining self-knowledge by realizing God—are none other than the veritable forms of God. Taking into account the difference in the aspirants' self-control and conviction, the Tantras have dealt with three different modes of worship, namely the "animal", the "heroic" and the "divine", and have advised them to worship God according to the first, second or third mode. In course of time people almost completely forgot that the results of the Tantric practices could only be obtained if the aspirants resorted to austere self-control as the basis of those disciplines; they engaged themselves in many evil practices, for which the Tantras

themselves were held responsible by all and were ridiculed by the common run of people. The success of the Master, remaining in full possession of the filial attitude towards all women throughout those practices, has been of immense benefit to both the true aspirants and the Tantric scriptures—to the former, by pointing out to them the right way to the goal of their lives; to the latter, by bringing out their real glory and firmly establishing their authenticity.

17. Another reason why the Master undertook Tantric Sadhanas

Although the Master practised the disciplines according to the Tantric mysteries for three or four years, he, it seems, did not tell any of us their consecutive order or give any one of us a detailed account of them. But in order to encourage us on the path of Sadhana, he told many of us of these facts on many occasions, or according to individual needs, and made a rare few of us perform some of those practices. The Mother of the universe, it appears, made the Master fully acquainted with this path at that time, because if he had not himself had the uncommon experiences resulting from the Tantric practices, he would not have been able to detect the mental states of the devotees of different nature who came to him in his later life, and to lead them forward on the path of Sadhana. We have elsewhere[1] given a little indication of how the Master guided the devotees who came to him and took refuge in him along various paths of discipline. The reader going through them will easily understand the reasonableness of what we have said above. Therefore it is needless to mention that here again.

18. The visions and experiences of the Master at the time of the Tantric Sadhanas

19. He took the remnants of food taken by jackals and dogs

Besides telling us, in this manner, of the Tantric practices, the Master sometimes mentioned to us many of his visions and experiences. We shall now tell the reader a few of them. A root-and-branch change, the Master said, came over his former nature at the time of the Tantric Sadhana. When

he was told that the divine Mother sometimes assumed the form of a jackal, and that the dogs were the carriers of Bhairava, he regarded the remnants of food taken by those animals as pure and sacred and partook of them as Prasada without feeling the slightest hesitation.

20. He saw himself pervaded by the fire of knowledge

Offering heartily, as oblations to the lotus feet, of the divine Mother, his body, mind, life and all—the Master saw himself incessantly pervaded, inwardly and outwardly, by the fire of knowledge.

21. He saw the awakening of the Kundalini

The Master saw during this period that the Kundalini was awakened, and it proceeded upwards to the head. All the lotuses from the Muladhara, the basic centre, to the thousandpetalled Sahasrara in the head, turned upwards and opened fully. As soon as they did so one after another, he got strange and wonderful experiences.[1] He saw for example that a celestial luminous male figure went through the Sushumna, the Canal Centralis, to those lotuses, now turning upwards, and made them open by touching them with his tongue.

22. His vision of the Brahmayoni, the divine womb

At one time, when Swami Vivekananda sat for meditation, there appeared before him a very large, wonderful triangle of light which, he felt, was living. One day he came to Dakshineswar and told the Master this, when the latter said, “Very good; you have seen the Brahmayoni; while practising Sadhana under the Vilva tree, I also saw it; what was more, I observed it giving birth to innumerable worlds every moment.”

23. He heard the Anahata Dhvani

At that time the Master heard, arising naturally and unceasingly everywhere in the universe, the Anahata Dhvani, the great Pranava sound,

which is the aggregate of all the different sounds of the universe. Some of us heard this from the Master himself and also heard him say that he could at that time understand the meanings of the cries of all animals.

24. The vision about the worthlessness of miraculous powers

During that period, the Master saw the divine Mother Herself dwelling in the female form. In the latter part of this period the Master felt in himself the presence of the miraculous powers, like the one of becoming as small as an atom. One day he went at the instance of Hriday to the universal Mother to know, the propriety and utility of applying them and saw that they were to be shunned and discarded like excreta. The Master said that since then it appeared loathsome to him to hear the term "miraculous power".

25. The Master's talk with Swami Vivekananda about the eight miraculous powers

We are reminded of one thing about the Master's possession of the 'eight miraculous powers'. One day he called Swami Vivekananda privately to the Panchavati and said, "Look here I have got the well-known 'eight miraculous powers'. But I decided long ago that I will never make use of them; nor do I see any need for applying them; you will have to do many things like preaching religion; I have made up my mind to give them to you; here they are." The Swami said to him in reply, "Sir, will these help me in any way in realizing God?" When afterwards he came to know from the Master's reply that, although they could be of some help in such activities as preaching religion, they would not in any way assist him in realizing God, he declined to accept them, at which, the Swami told us afterwards, the Master was highly pleased with him.

26. His vision of the deluding power of the universal Mother

There arose in the Master's mind during this period, a desire to see the deluding power of the Mother of the universe when he Saw that a female figure of extraordinary beauty rose from the waters of the Ganga and came

with a dignified gait to the Panchavati. Presently he saw that the said figure was in an advanced stage of pregnancy; a few minutes later he saw that she gave birth to a beautiful baby in his very presence and suckled the baby very affectionately; the next moment he saw that the same figure assumed a very cruel and frightful appearance and, taking the baby into her mouth, masticated it and swallowed it! She then entered the waters of the river whence she had appeared.

27. The beauty of Shodasi, the Mahavidya

Besides the visions mentioned above, there was no limit to the number of the Devi's forms, ranging from the two-armed to the ten-armed, that he saw during this period. Again, some of those engaged themselves in conversing with him and gave him various instructions. Although all those forms of Hers were of extraordinary beauty, we were told by him that they were not worth comparison in that respect with that of Sri Rajarajeswari, otherwise called Shodasi. The Master said, "I saw in a vision the beauty of the person of Shodasi which melted, and spread all around illumining the quarters." At that time the Master had the visions of various male figures like Bhairava and also visions of celestial beings. From the time of his Tantric Sadhana, there were so many extraordinary visions and experiences in the Master's life day after day that it is beyond the power of man to mention all of them. It is therefore needless to spend any more time in making that attempt.

28. As the result of Tantric Sadhana, the Master became free from body-consciousness and attained a childlike nature

We heard from the Master himself that from the time of his Tantric Sadhana, the orifice of his Sushumna was fully opened and his nature was permanently converted into that of a boy. From the latter part of that period, he could not, in spite of his efforts, retain his cloth, sacred thread, etc., on his person for any length of time. He did not feel where and when all these things slipped off. It is needless to mention that this condition was caused by the absence in him of body-consciousness, on account of his mind remaining always absorbed in the lotus feet of the divine Mother. We have

it from the Master himself that, unlike the ordinary Paramahamsas he never practised wandering or remaining naked—it naturally came to him with his gradual loss of body-consciousness. The Master said that at the end of those disciplines his knowledge of non-duality with regard to all things increased so much that he felt that those things which he considered to be trifling and worth discarding from his childhood, now appeared to be as pure as the purest. He asserted, "The holy basil and the legumen of Sajina (drumstick)[1] were felt by me to be equally holy."

29. The splendour of the Master's person during Tantric Sadhanas

Again, the splendour of the Master's person increased so much for a few years from that time, that he became the cynosure of all eyes at all times. As he was devoid of egoism, he was so much annoyed at it that he prayed on many occasions to the divine Mother to be rid of that celestial beauty, and imploringly said, "Mother, I have not the slightest need of this external beauty; please take it away and give me instead the inward spiritual beauty." We have told the reader elsewhere[2] that this prayer of his was fulfilled afterwards.

30. The Bhairavi Brahmani was a part of Yogamaya

Just as the Brahmani helped the Master in his Tantric Sadhanas, so did the Master help the Brahmani later in developing her spiritual life. We have already given an indication of the fact that, but for the Master's help, she could not have established herself in the divine mood. The name of the Brahmani was Yogeswari who, the Master said, was a part of Yogamaya (the mystic power of the Lord).

Attaining divine powers on account of his Tantric Sadhana, the Master came to know another thing. He came to know by the grace of the divine Mother that many persons would come in later days to him and get spiritual enlightenment from him and thus their life's purpose would be fulfilled. He told this to Hriday and also to Mathur, who was greatly devoted to him; Mathur replied, "How very good, Father! we shall all make merry in your company."

Footnote

1. ‘Now hear, O queen of the Devas, of the best Sadhana with the help of skulls, by the performance of which the Sadhaka attains the supreme goal, which is the great Devi Herself. O one of excellent face, “the three skulls” are those of a man, a buffalo and a cat or they are “three skulls” of men alone; and the heads of a jackal, a snake, a dog, and a bull and, in the midst of these, the head of a man— otherwise the five skulls of men alone, are called, O powerful one, “ the five skulls” collectively ... And on it an altar, a span square, should be made. Or an altar, four cubits square, O Devi, should be built.’ *The fifth Fatal—Yogini-Tantra.*

2. The Sadhakas generally make one altar on five heads interred; and sit on it practising Japa, meditation, etc. But the Master told us of two ‘skull-seats’. Three human skulls were interred below the altar under the Vilva tree and five skulls of five species of dead beings were interred below that under the Panchavati. Shortly after he became perfect in his Sadhanas, he threw those skulls into the Ganga and broke down both the altars. Two ‘seats’ were made, because the seat of ‘three-skulls’ was favourable to Sadhana or because the spot under the Vilva tree was at that time wholly solitary and, therefore, more convenient for Sadhanas. Or it may be that no fire for Homa could be kindled under the Vilva tree on account of its proximity to the “ Company’s “ (Government of India’s) magazine.

1. What we heard from the Master at different times are given here in a connected way.

1. In Bengali the word ‘Karana’ means both ‘cause’ and ‘wine’; so by the law of association the mention of the one gave rise to the thought of the other, of wine to the universal Cause.

1. III. l. 2.

1. III. 2.

1. Hyperanthena moranga.

2. III. 7. 8.

CHAPTER XII
THE SADHU WITH MATTED HAIR AND THE MASTER'S SADHANA OF THE VATSALYA BHAVA

1. Mathur's experience and behaviour on receiving the Master's grace

Sri Yogeswari, the Bhairavi, came to the Kali temple at Dakshineswar after the virtuous Rani Rasmani had passed away in the latter part of 1861. The Master applied himself particularly to the Tantric disciplines from that time to 1863. Mathur Babu had the privilege of serving the Master and thereby feeling blessed, when the Master plunged himself in those disciplines. Just as before that period Mathur had become firmly convinced, by repeatedly testing him, of his extraordinary love for God, wonderful self-control, and glowing renunciation and detachment, so, during this period of his Tantra Sadhana, as a result of experiencing time and again divine powers manifested in him, he came to the firm conclusion that it was the Devi, his chosen Ideal Herself, who, in the person of Sri Ramakrishna, had become pleased to accept his services[1] and was protecting him in all respects and accompanying him everywhere, maintaining his influence and authority over the estate and covering him with ever-increasing honour and respect. He thought so because, during this time, he succeeded in whatever he undertook, and regarded himself as exceedingly befriended by the Divinethrough the Master. It was, therefore, no wonder that Mathur spent unstintingly large sums of money in supplying articles conducive to the Master's Sadhana and for serving God and performing other virtuous deeds according to his wish.

As the manifestation of the spiritual powers of the Master increased day by day through the Tantric practices, Mathur, who had taken refuge at his

holy feet, found his ardour, courage and strength correspondingly developed. His feeling was now similar to that of a devotee who reposed his faith in God and experienced in his heart extraordinary enthusiasm and accession of strength when he attained His grace and felt safe under His protection. But the devotion of the worldly Mathur in whose nature Rajas predominated, remained quite satisfied with rendering service to the Master and performing virtuous acts, never wishing to advance far into the spiritual realm. Although this was so, Mathur was perfectly convinced that the Master was the only source of his strength, his intelligence and his hope, that he alone was his prop and support in this world and in the next, and that he was at the root of his worldly prosperity, exalted position, etc.

2. Mathur undertook the religious vow of a gift of a 'mountain of food'

The undertakings that Mathur carried out at that time prove that he now considered himself fully secure in his worldly affairs through the grace of the Master. We read in the book entitled "A story of the life of Rani Rasmani" that Mathuranath performed the very expensive religious ceremony called the Annameru, the gift of a "mountain of food" and other necessaries, in 1864 at Dakshineswar. Hriday said that besides plentiful gold, silver, etc., he gave away to the Pandits a thousand maunds of rice and an equal amount of sesame, and appointed Sahachari, the well-known songstress, to sing the glory of God and Rajnarayan to sing the songs of Chandi, converting the Kali temple into a festive ground for some time. Hriday said further that Mathur saw the Master enter repeatedly into ecstasy listening to the highly devotional songs rendered by those singers. In fact, he took the varying degrees of the Master's appreciative reaction in this respect to be the measure of their talents and accordingly gave them as reward precious shawls, silks and hundreds of rupees.

3. The Master met Padmalochan, the Vedantic scholar

Attracted by the humility and innumerable other qualities of Padmalochan, the then principal court-pandit of the Maharaja of Burdwan, the Master had gone to see him some time before the gift of the "mountain

of food" was made by Mathur. We were told by the Master that Mathur had a great desire to have that famous scholar brought to the meeting of Pandits, convened at the time of that religious ceremony, and make him accept gifts. Knowing that the Pandit was greatly devoted to the Master, Mathur sent him an invitation through Hriday. But Padmalochan could not accept at that time the respectful invitation of Mathur. We have narrated in detail the story of Padmalochan elsewhere.[1]

4. The reason why the Master undertook the Vaishnava Sadhanas

The Master became attracted towards the disciplines of the Vaishnava doctrines after he had finished the Tantric ones. We find, as the result of our inquiries, some obvious reasons leading to that. Firstly, the devout Bhairavi Brahmani was an expert in the disciplines of the Panchabhavas spoken of in the Vaishnava scriptures, and spent long periods of time in mastering one or other of them. We have mentioned before that she fed the Master in the same affectionate spiritual attitude as Yasoda used to feed her boy Gopala. Therefore it is not improbable that she encouraged the Master to undertake the discipline of the Vaishnava doctrines. Secondly, it was but natural for the Master, born as he was in a Vaishnava family, to have love for the disciplines of the spiritual modes of the Vaishnavas. He had had great opportunities for cultivating reverence for those Sadhanas which were prevalent at and around Kamarpukur. The third and the most important of those reasons, however, was that there was in the Master an extraordinary blend of the natures of both man and woman. Under the influence of one of them, he appeared to be the best of austere, valorous men, fearless like a lion, who would not rest satisfied without probing everything to the very bottom; while, under the influence of the other, he became possessed of a wonderful feminine nature, tender yet severe, applying himself to seeing and weighing things and persons in the world through his own heart; he became by nature deeply attached to or detached from certain things and could bear with ease endless troubles when the heart responded, but unlike ordinary people he could do nothing when it did not.

5. There arose feminine modes in the Master's mind before he undertook the Sadhana of the Vatsalya Bhava and the Madhura Bhava

During the first four years of the Master's spiritual practices when he did not accept any external help, he undertook the disciplines of the modes of Santa and Dasya and sometimes that of Sakhya like that of Sridama, Sudama and other friends of Sri Krishna at Vraja and attained success in all of them. The reader perhaps remembers that the Master had recourse to Dasya Bhava and passed some time in the mode of Mahavir to whom Ramachandra was as dear as life, and that he had the vision of Sita, Janaka's daughter who suffered misery all her life. He, therefore, now applied his mind to the disciplines of the two principal devotional modes of Vatsalya and Madhura practised by the Vaishnava teachers. During that period he looked upon himself as a woman friend of the divine Mother, and engaged himself in fanning Her with a Chamara. Dressed in a woman's apparel and surrounded by ladies, he paid obeisance to the Devi during Her autumn worship at the Calcutta house of Mathuranath, and on account of the absorption in feminine feelings, often forgot that he had a male body.[1] When we began to visit the holy feet of the Master at Dakshineswar, we sometimes saw this female nature manifested in him. But it did not then last so long as at the time we are speaking of. And there was no need of it; for, it then became easy for him, by the grace of the divine Mother, to dwell at will in any mode whatsoever, of a man or a woman or in that of non-duality, which is beyond all modes and is the source of them all. He then stayed, for the good of the visiting devotees, as long as he liked in any particular mood.

6. A discussion on the constitution of the Master's mind

Be that as it may, if the reader wants to form a conception of the greatness of the Master's life during his Sadhana he must, first of all, consider deeply with the help of his imagination the uncommon elements his mind was made of from his birth, the manner in which it moved about daily in the world and the nature of the changes produced in it by the impact of the fierce spiritual storm that raged for the last eight years of his life of Sadhana. We were told by himself that he sincerely believed until he came

to the Kali temple at Dakshineswar in the year 1855 and for some time afterwards, that he would lead, like his forefathers, the life of a strict and virtuous householder. As he was free from egoism from his birth, it never crossed his mind that he was superior to anyone in the world in any respect, or possessed nobler qualities than anyone. But his extraordinary speciality began to manifest itself at every step when he stepped into the field of action. He felt as if an unknown, divine Power accompanied him every moment and painting in lurid colours the transitoriness and worthlessness of sights, tastes etc., held them before his eyes and forced him to orientate his life in an opposite direction. A selfless seeker after unalloyed truth, the Master very soon accustomed himself to move about in the world at the promptings of that Power. It is clear that it would have been difficult for him to do so, if he had a strong desire for attaining any objects of enjoyment in the world.

7. How nonexistent was any bondage due to past impression in his mind

What we have said will become clear if one remembers the Master's lifelong behaviour on all matters. He discontinued his studies when he understood that the aim of the Brahmins in acquiring this learning was only "bundling of rice and plantain", in other words, earning money. He accepted the post of a priest thinking it would be of help in managing worldly affairs; but he soon realized that the aim of worshipping God was something quite different, viz., to see Him and live in Him; and at once he became mad after it. He knew that realization of God depended on perfect self-control and, although married, he refrained from having any sexual relations with his wife through body, mind or speech; he understood that no man could have perfect reliance on God if he stored anything for future use, and at once he eradicated completely from his mind the idea of laying up even trifling things, not to speak of hoarding gold and other precious materials. Instances like these could easily be multiplied from his life. When one thinks of these facts, it becomes clear how little his mind was influenced by ingrained tendencies that produce delusion in people's minds. The Master's power of understanding ideas and making them practical was so strong that his Samskaras could not stand against it and make him deviate from his path.

8. The noble qualities the Master had when he engaged himself in Sadhana

Besides, the Master was from his childhood a Srutidhara, a person of wonderful retentive memory, one who could repeat word for word in due order what he had heard but once and who could retain it for ever. The reader already knows how in his childhood he, along with his friends, used to rehearse, in the fields and pastures of Kamarpukur, the songs, Yatras, and stories of the *Ramayana,* the *Mahabharata* and other books on listening to them but once. So we see that the Master entered upon his life of spiritual practices with the rare possession of an extraordinarily wonderful memory, love of truth and of putting ideas into practice as the very bases of his practices,—the three qualities, which it is not easy for an ordinary aspirant to acquire even by a whole life's effort. It was, therefore, no wonder that he attained in a short time great success in his spiritual life. The reason why we were amazed to hear that he succeeded in each of his disciplines even in three days, was that we did not then understand an iota of his uncommon mental constitution.

9. Illustrations of the Master's uncommon mental make up and a discussion on it

The reader will understand this statement of ours when we mention a few events of the Master's life. In the beginning of his spiritual practice as soon as the Master discriminated between the real and the unreal and threw into the Ganga a few coins along with lumps of earth, repeating "rupee-earth, earth-rupee", the attachment to gold, which spreads its influence down to the very bottom of the human heart, became eradicated for ever from his mind; no sooner had he cleaned with his own hands those abominably filthy places, at whose contamination people could not rest satisfied without a bath, than his mind gave up the egoism due to his Brahmin birth and he became convinced for ever that he was in no way superior to those persons who were regarded in society as untouchables; as soon as he was convinced that he was a child of the divine Mother and "all the women of the world were parts of Her",[1] it became impossible for him to look upon any woman

as other than the divine Mother Herself, and to have the ordinary conjugal relationship with any. When one ponders over these instances one clearly feels that the Master could not have achieved those results if he had not had an extraordinary power of understanding ideas and making them practical. The reason why we cannot fully believe in the events of the Master's life, or are astonished to hear them, is that we look into our own hearts and find that our attachment to gold will not vanish if we throw into water coins and lumps of earth a thousand times, that the egoism of our mind will not be washed off even if we clean dirty places the same number of times and that the filial attitude towards every woman will not arise in our minds at the critical moment even if we are told all our lives, of the manifestation of the divine Mother as women. We cannot attain the results as the Master could in these things in spite of our efforts, because our power of understanding ideas and making them practical is chained down by the impressions of our past Karma. We enter the realm of Sadhana with minds devoid of self-control and retentive power and full of such adverse traits, and of course, we meet with corresponding results as well.

It is doubtful whether even in the course of four or five centuries there will come into the world one with a mind of such extraordinary powers as the Master. It is impossible for minds like ours even to imagine how unique the Master's mind was, how by nature it was endowed with full self-control and perfect retentive power and was devoid of all evil traits, and how much greater power and subtler insight it attained by the impulsion of an extraordinary loving eagerness and endeavour for the realization of the complete vision of the divine Mother, which made him forget food, sleep etc., for such a long period.

10. Mathur's services to holy men at the Master's behest

We have already said that no falling off was observed in the service of the divine Mother in the temple at Dakshineswar after the death of Rani Rasmani. Mathur, to whom Sri Ramakrishna was as dear as life, was not only not averse to spending the stipulated amount in Her service, but generously spent unusually large sums of money at the Master's behest. Besides performing the services of deities, he was greatly fond of serving

holy men. For, owing to the teaching of the Master, Mathur, who had taken refuge at his feet, looked upon devout holy men as the exact images of God. Therefore, when the Master asked him to make arrangements for offering to the Sadhus clothes, blankets, water-pots and other necessaries, besides food, for their daily use, Mathur purchased all those articles and stored them in a room to its fullest capacity, so that they might be given to the holy men to their full satisfaction. He told his officers that the articles in the new store should be distributed according to the Master's orders. Again, when he came to know soon afterwards that a desire had arisen in the Master's mind to serve the devout holy men of all denominations, by giving them articles useful to their spiritual practices, Mathur made due arrangements about, it too.[1] All these gifts were probably made in the year 1862-63, when the wonderful hospitality at the Kali temple of Rani Rasmani became widely known everywhere among the Sadhus. Although, even during the Rani's lifetime, the Kali temple had been regarded by the travelling holy pilgrims as a resting place on their way to their destinations, its reputation now spread to a wider region, and devout monks, the foremost of all denominations, came there in large numbers. Pleased with the hospitality accorded to them, they went their way blessing the manager for the services so devotedly rendered. We have recorded elsewhere, all that we were told by the Master himself, of the eminent holy men who came there in this way. We mention it here again, only because we want to tell the reader about the time of the arrival at Dakshineswar of the holy man of the Ramawat denomination named "Jatadhari", by whom the Master was initiated in the Mantra of Rama and from whom he got the image of the child Rama called "Ramalala". It was probably in the year 1864 that he came to the Master.

11. Jatadhari's arrival at Dakshineswar

On many occasions we have heard from the Master himself of Jatadhari's extraordinary love and attachment to Ramachandra. The image of the child Ramachandra was very dear to him. As a result of his serving that image for a long time with much love, his mind ascended to the realm of divine love and reached an inward state, in which it lost itself so much that even before he came to the Master at Dakshineswar, he saw the form of the luminous

child Rama actually before him accepting his services which were purified by devotion. At first that vision appeared before him for a moment, time after time, and overwhelmed him with bliss. But the more he advanced in Sadhana with the passing of time, the more did the vision become intense and continue for long periods, till at last it became as vivid and continuous as ordinary objects of sight are. Thus established in loving spiritual contemplativeness, he had the child Rama for almost a constant companion. Engaging himself daily in the services of that image, Ramalala, with the help of which he had realized that divine vision in his life, Jatadhari travelled at pleasure to the various places of pilgrimage in India and came to the Kali temple at Dakshineswar.

12. The intimate relation of the Master with Jatadhari

Jatadhari, who applied himself whole-heartedly to the service of Ramalala, did not divulge to anyone that he had the privilege of having every now and then the vision of the form of the child Rama, the embodiment of love. People could only see that he always served a metal image of a child with extraordinary steadfastness every day. They knew that much and nothing more. But the insight of the Master, the matchless lord of the realm of spiritual moods, pierced the gross external curtain at his very first meeting with Jatadhari and ascertained the hidden inward mystery. Therefore he had a great respect for that monk and joyfully supplied him with all the articles necessary for his service of Ramalala. Besides, the Master spent long hours with him every day and devoutly witnessed his service of Ramalala. The Master did so only because he, as we have said elsewhere,[1] had the divine vision of Rama's celestial form, the embodiment of spiritual love, which Jatadhari also used to have. Accordingly the relation of the Master with Jatadhari gradually became intimate and respectful.

13. The Master in the mood of a female companion of the divine Mother

We have already mentioned that the Master spent some time in the mood of a woman to satisfy an urge to develop this aspect of his dual personality. Looking upon himself as the eternal female companion of the universal

Mother, he applied himself wholly for a pretty long time to Her service. He would adorn and decorate Her with flower-garlands prepared with his own hands and with new gold ornaments got ready by Mathur at his request, fan Her with a Chamara to cool Her person, and sing and dance before Her in a woman's dress to please Her. It is needless to say that the Master undertook to perform all these, because a strong urge to do so arose in his mind of his own accord.

14. The Master engaged himself in the Vatsalya mood of Sadhana during the prevalence of womanly feelings in him

The Master's love and devotion to Rama revived in his mind when Jatadhari came and he had talks with him. The form of Rama that he now saw in the image of Ramalala under the revived impulse, was that of Rama, the embodiment of spiritual love. Therefore, it is no wonder that his mind was now filled with maternal affection for that divine Child. The Master began to feel towards the divine Child that wonderful love and attraction which a mother feels towards her young child. That love and attraction alone, doubtless, made the Master now sit beside the child-image of Ramalala, and look at it so intently that he did not know how time slipped away. For, by means of various sweet childish pranks, the Master said, the extraordinary effulgent Child made him forget everything else, tried to detain him daily near It, watched his path in expectation of his coming and accompanied him everywhere in spite of his requests not to do so.

15. His effort to realize the ultimate limits of any idea that arose in his mind; whether one should do so or not

The active mind of the Master could not leave any work half-finished. That nature of his manifested in the concrete fields of work, was also seen in the sphere of the subtle ideal world. It was seen that if any idea arose of its own accord in his heart, he could not rest satisfied without reaching its ultimate limits. On studying that nature of his, some readers may think, "But is it good? Is it beneficial to a man to run in pursuit of any and every idea that may arise in his mind at any time and become a tool in its hands?"

Although that nature of the Master did not lead him astray, it should not be imitated by the people in general inasmuch as all ideas, good and bad, always arise in the minds of weak humanity. Man should never have such a faith in himself as to believe that only good ideas will arise in his mind. Therefore it should be the aim of man to rein back his desires. We admit that this is a reasonable argument, but we have something to say in fuller explanation of this.

16. Controlling of desires is not necessary for a confirmed Sadhaka like the Master. The reason thereof

We can by no means deny that the mind of a man, excessively desirous of enjoying lust and gold and completely fettered to them, should not repose so much faith in itself. Therefore, it is ignorant and short-sighted people alone who can raise any doubt regarding the need for people in general to control their desires. But with some rare Sadhakas, the Vedas and the other scriptures say, self-control becomes, by the grace of God, as normal a function as breathing. Therefore, completely freed from the attraction of lust and gold, their minds get converted into repositories of good and healthy ideas alone. The Master also said that no evil desire can, by the grace of the divine Mother, raise its head and have mastery over the mind of a man who has taken perfect refuge in Her. “Mother,” said he, “prevents him from taking a wrong step.” A man who has reached such a state can perfectly trust each and every impulse of his; then it not only does him no harm but becomes a source of immense good to others. For, it becomes absolutely impossible for that man to seek his self-interest in that state, inasmuch as the little “I”, born of the identification with the body, which produces selfishness and is not contented even with the attainment of all the pleasures of the world, is merged for ever in the all-pervading “I” of God. Therefore the will of God, whose nature it is to do good to all, then manifests itself as various desires in the mind of that man for universal welfare. Or the Sadhaka, in that state, always feels in his heart of hearts, “I am the machine, Thou art the mechanic”; and making sure that the desires in his own mind are the will of God, the all-pervading Person, he does not at all hesitate to act according to their urge. And consequently, it is seen that

others are greatly benefited by such actions of his. Such a state comes very early in the lives of uncommonly great souls like the Master. Therefore these great souls, we read in their biographies, trust completely the desires of their minds and very often undertake actions without having recourse to reasoning or inference at all. Keeping their little wills identified with the universal Will, they can always detect and understand things beyond the minds and intellects of the ordinary people, inasmuch as these are manifest from eternity to eternity as subtle ideas in the universal Mind.

17. Such Sadhakas are not perturbed even by the manner and time of their death. Examples thereof

Again, coming down to the normal state of humanity these great souls remain always dependent on the universal Will and, therefore, are free from fear and self-interest. Hence, although during the previous state of their identification, they knew beforehand how and by whom or by what the combination of their limited bodies and minds would be destroyed, they entertain no aversion to those persons or objects; rather they gladly help them to the utmost in carrying out the work. The reader will understand what we mean if we give a few examples. Conscious of the inevitability of Sita's banishment, Rama sent her away to the forest, though He knew that She was innocent. Though He knew that the forsaking of Lakshmana, who was dearer than His life, would inevitably bring His Lila as a human being to an end, He carried it out. Knowing beforehand that the race of Yadu, to which He belonged, would be destroyed, Krishna did not make the slightest attempt to prevent it. On the contrary, He acted in such a way as to bring it about at the proper time. Again, knowing it for certain that He would meet with His death at the hands of the hunter, He concealed His whole body carefully behind the leaves of a tree and kept the two reddish feet dangling in such a way that, as soon as the hunter saw them, he mistook them for a bird and shot them with his arrow. He then blessed and consoled the hunter, who was repenting his mistake, and gave up His body.

Although he already knew that he would attain Parinirvana, body-lessness in the final beatitude, if he accepted the hospitality of the Chandala, Buddha accepted it and ascended to that state, having protected the

Chandala by his blessing and consolation from other's hatred and reproach. Again, conscious that the religion preached by him would soon be polluted if he gave his approval to women's initiation into Sannyasa, he permitted the venerable Gautami, his aunt, to be so initiated.

In spite of knowing that Judas, his disciple, would betray him into the hands of the enemy who would put an end to his life, Jesus, another incarnation of God, remained uniformly affectionate to him and engaged himself, all his life, in doing him good.

18. No desire tarnished with selfishness arises in the mind of such a Sadhaka

We meet on investigation with many such events even in the lives of persons perfected and liberated in life, not to speak of the incarnations of God. If we want to find a rational explanation of the happy synthesis between the uncommon Personal effort and the absolute dependence on the universal Will, which is invariably noticed in the lives of these personalities, we are inevitably led to the conclusion that their personal efforts are but the manifestation of the same all-pervading Will. Therefore it is clear that all the selfish impressions in the minds of these persons who depend absolutely on God's will, are destroyed once for all; their minds ascend to a holy plane of consciousness where pure desires alone, absolutely untarnished by selfishness, arise in them. So freely reposing their faith in the desires of their minds and acting under their impulse, these Sadhakas, in that state, do not incur any blame. Such actions of the Master, it goes without saying, should not be imitated by the ordinary people. But the Sadhakas, in the unique state mentioned above, will, no doubt, be much enlightened by them in guiding their lives. The scriptures have compared their desires for eating, drinking, etc., which are necessary for the preservation of life, to fried seeds. Just as roasted seeds of trees, creepers, etc., lose their vital power and cannot germinate, so the worldly desires of those persons, roasted over the fire of self-control and divine knowledge, can no more draw them towards enjoyment and lead them astray. The Master also said about it, "coming in contact with the philosopher's stone, a

steel sword becomes golden; it retains unchanged its formidable form, but it can inflict no injury."

19. All mentations of such Sadhakas correspond to facts. Examples in the Master's life

The seers of the Upanishads say that all the mental processes of the Sadhakas in that state correspond to facts. In other words, all the ideas arising naturally in their minds always prove to be objectively true and never otherwise. We could never have believed the above-mentioned words of the seers if we had not repeatedly tested the ideas of the Master established in Bhavamukha and found them to be true! If he felt hesitation about taking any food, it was, we have seen, found on enquiry to have been polluted before. If he felt his power of speech failing him suddenly when he was about to say anything spiritual to anybody, it was proved that the said person was, in truth, completely unfit for it. If he felt that a certain person would not realize religious truths or would realize but a few in his life, it actually came to happen so. If any particular mood, or a particular form of a deity appeared in his mind when he saw a certain person, it was known that the said person was a Sadhaka of that mood, or that deity. If he suddenly said anything to any person under the influence of an inward mood, that person got much light by it and his life became altogether changed,—innumerable incidents of this type can be cited.

20. The Master was initiated in the Vatsalya mood of Sadhana by Jatadhari. He practised it and reached its acme

Urged by that irresistible inward devotional mood, the Master as he used to do on many other occasions, now regarded himself as a woman, both in body and mind and acted accordingly. So when he had the vision of Rama as a sweet child, he assumed the attitude of maternal affection towards Him. He had been, no doubt, initiated in the Mantra of Rama long ago in order to perform properly the worship and service of his family deity Raghuvir; but he was then not attracted towards Him in any mood except that of a servant towards his Master. Having the above-mentioned new mood towards the

deity, he now became anxious to be initiated by a Guru according to the scriptures in a Mantra befitting the new mood and to reach the ultimate limit of realization in that discipline. Perfected in the Mantra of the divine Child, Jatadhari came to know the eagerness of the Master and gladly initiated him in the Mantra of his own chosen Ideal. Merged in the Sadhana of that Mantra in the manner taught by him, the Master succeeded in the course of only a few days, in having the divine vision of the child Rama constantly. Absorbed in the meditation of that divine form in the mood of maternal affection towards Him, he soon came to realize that: “Rama, who is the son of Dasaratha, is in every being; the same Rama is immanent in the universe and yet transcends it”. That is to say, Rama is not only Dasaratha’s son but also exists as a Jiva in each body. Again, entering the universe and eternally manifesting Himself as it, He is ever existent in His own attributeless nature devoid of Maya and beyond everything in the universe. We heard the Master reciting on many occasions the Hindi couplet given above.

21. Jatadhari made a gift of the image of Ramalala to the Master

Besides initiating the Master in the Mantra, Jatadhari, before he went away, made a gift to the Master of the image of Ramalala, which he had served so long with single-minded devotion. For, that living image expressed his desire to Jatadhari that he would henceforward live with the Master. We have described elsewhere[1] in detail the extraordinary Lila of that image with the Master and Jatadhari. Therefore it is unnecessary to deal with that topic here again.

22. To what extent the Bhairavi Brahmani helped the Master at the time of Vatsalya Sadhana

When the Master applied his mind, in the aforesaid manner, to perfecting his Vatsalya devotion and experienced its ultimate result, the Bhairavi Brahmani was staying at Dakshineswar. We were told by the Master himself that she was as highly experienced in the disciplines of the Panchabhavas spoken of in the Vaishnava books, as she was in those of the Tantras. Did

the Master receive any particular help from her while practising the Vatsalya and Madhura Bhavas? We have not clearly heard anything about it from him. But we were told by the Master and Hriday that, established in the mood of maternal affection towards God, the Brahmani treated the Master as Gopala, the child Krishna. Therefore it is inferred that the Master got at least some help from her, both at the time when he assumed the mood of maternal affection towards the child Krishna and had the ultimate experience in that mood, and when he practised Madhura Bhava, the sweet mood, himself adopting the attitude of a woman towards her lover. One might doubt whether he actually got any particular help from her; but this much is admitted without doubt, that a strong desire to practise the disciplines of those moods arose in his mind when he-saw the Brahmani engaged in them and heard her eulogize them.

Footnote

1. III. 6.

1. III. 2.

1. III.7.

1. *Chandi* 11. 6.

1. III. 2.

1. IV. 2.

1. IV. 2.

CHAPTER XIII
THE ESSENCE OF THE MADHURA BHAVA
(SWEET MOOD)

1. The hard inward struggle of the aspirant and his goal

2. The natural inclination of the minds of extraordinary Sadhakas is to remain in the Nirvikalpa Samadhi. Sri Ramakrishna is one of this class

It is difficult for one who is not a Sadhaka to understand the biographies of Sadhakas, for Sadhana is a thing of the subtle realm of spirituality. There the gross deluding forms of sight, taste and other sense-objects are not experienced; there, the marvellous co-existence or succession of events around what appear to be external things and persons is not seen; neither is there the slightest manifestation of the frantic efforts which a man makes for the sole purpose of enjoying the monopoly of pleasures for elbowing out all others, which the ordinary people, deluded by sense-objects, extol as heroism and greatness, but which, in reality, are but products of the human mind rendered restless under the impulse of the pairs of opposites such as attachment and aversion, fame and infamy, etc. But what exist there are only the aspirant's mind and the infinite currents of its impressions of past lives. In that realm there exists the attraction towards high ideals leading the aspirant on to the ultimate goal, attraction produced by his constantly coming in conflict with certain external things and persons. There exists his endless unflinching struggle against his adverse impressions in order to make the mind fix itself exclusively on those ideals leading on to that goal. There exists a resolute attempt at continually diving deeper into one's own personality by turning the mind away from all external objects and withdrawing it within. There exists the effort of mining in deeper and

deeper regions of the inner world and experiencing the subtler and subtler strata of ideas. And there is at last the final arrival at the deepest regions of one's own existence, where one realizes and remains identified with that one immutable Reality without a second, which is devoid of sound, touch and form, from which, as from their substratum, all the ideas including the "I" consciousness spring and in which they eternally exist. Afterwards, unless the impressions of the mind wear away completely and its doubting nature is destroyed for ever, it comes down from Samadhi, to experience the external world again by reversing the process through which it attained the immediate knowledge of the non-dual Reality. Thus does the mind of the aspirant continue to descend from the superconscious to the normal consciousness and again ascend from it to the superconscious, over and over again. But the history of the spiritual world has also on record the description of a few minds whose natural abode seemed to be the plane of the superconscious from the most ancient times, but who somehow kept themselves forcibly confined for some time to the plane of the external world for the good of humanity. The more we study the history of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual strivings, the more shall we understand that his mind belonged to this class. If that conviction be not produced in the minds of the readers from a study of this book, the shortcomings of the author should be held responsible for it; for the Master said to us repeatedly, "I hold forcibly to one or two trifling desires, with the help of which I keep the mind weighted down for you all; otherwise its natural inclination is to remain united and identified with the indivisible One."

3. What are called Sunya and Purna are one and the same Reality

Some of the ancient seers have called the indivisible non-dual Reality, the "void" (Sunya, the absence of all existence) and others have called It the "all" (Purna, where all experiences meet). As a matter of fact, both of them imply the same experience. For they have described It as One from which all things come into being and in which they merge. The Reality that has been called by Buddha the "void", in which all beings get extinguished, has been described by Sankara as the "all", the substratum of them all. If we

leave aside the opinions of the later Buddhist teachers and study Buddha and Sankara, we irresistibly come to this conclusion.

4. The nature of non-duality

The plane of the non-dual consciousness indirectly implied by the words "void" and "all" has been described in the Upanishads, the Vedanta, as the state beyond all ideation, For, perfectly established in it, the mind of the aspirant transcends the limits of all other planes of consciousness produced by God's play of creation, preservation and dissolution, and merges in homogeneity. Therefore, the non-dual state of consciousness is something non-relational, different from the five moods, such as the Santa, Dasya, etc., with the aid of which the limited human mind enters the spiritual realm and becomes bound up with God in an eternal relation. Only when the man of the world becomes absolutely indifferent to all kinds of enjoyment, whether of this world or of the next, and attains, on the strength of purity, a position higher than that of the gods, he comes to the non-dual mood. With the help of this he realizes the attributeless Brahman, in which the whole universe together with God, its creator, preserver and destroyer, has its eternal being and on the attainment of which the acme of life is reached.

5. The five moods of Santa, Dasya, etc., and the God attainable by them

Leaving aside the non-dual mood and the attributeless Brahman attainable with its help, we find the manifestation of the "five moods", namely, Santa, Dasya, Sakhya, Vatsalya and Madhura in the spiritual world. The object attainable through each of these is Brahman with attributes, or Isvara, who is all-controlling, all-powerful and by nature eternally pure, awakened and free. The aspirant tries to know Him by attributing one or other of these moods to himself with relation to Him. And He also, who is the inner controller of all beings and the repository of all moods, sees the single-minded devotion of the aspirant's mind and in order to help him in developing the mood, reveals Himself to him in a body conformable to it and thus blesses him. It is thus that God, who is pure consciousness, assumes in different ages various forms that are the embodiments of these

different moods. He, we read in the scriptures, incarnates Himself even as a man to fulfil the desires of the devotees.

6. The nature of the five moods. How they help man to progress

The five moods are the subtle and purified forms of those mundane relations by which human beings are bound up with one another in their daily lives. We are conscious of particular relations with father, mother, husband, wife, male friend, female friend, master, servant, son, daughter, king, subject, teacher, disciple and so on, and feel that we should behave towards others in a calm and respectful attitude of mind if they are not enemies. The teachers of devotion have classified those relations into five divisions of the Santa etc., and advised people to resort, according to their fitness, to one or other of these as the primary one, and attribute it to themselves with relation to God. For, it is easy for Jivas to try to know God with the help of these five moods or relations of Santa etc., with which they are always acquainted. That is not all. Those moods, which were formerly dependent on the worldly relations rooted in desires, producing aversion, attachment and other similar modifications, that impelled men to commit various evil actions, will now, when oriented towards God, help the aspirants advance towards the realization of God by their irresistible original impetus. Take for example, lust, which is a disease, so to say, of the heart and the cause of all misery. It will now keep them engaged in the desire for God-vision. Their anger will now be directed against the things and persons that are obstacles on their paths to that vision. They will now become mad after and infatuated with the enjoyment of the wonderful beauty and love of God, the object to be attained, and noticing the unique splendour of spirituality in persons who have succeeded in attaining the holy vision of God, the culmination of blessedness, they will now become anxious to have it themselves.

7. Love is the means to the Sadhana of the five spiritual moods; and the personality of God is its object

Man has not learnt to assume these five moods in his relation to God at any particular time or from any particular person. But many great souls appeared in this great hermitage of the world at different times and engaged themselves in practices for the realization of God through one, two or more of these moods, and having made the Lord their own by means of their extraordinary love, taught men to do likewise. When we study the unique lives of these teachers, it becomes clear that only the love for God is at the root of the Sadhanas of those moods and that the said love has always for its object one or other of the numerous forms of the personal God; for, as long as man does not experience the non-dual Reality, so long is he bound to have the conception and experience of one or other of the forms of the personal God.

8. Love brings to an end the consciousness of power. This removal is the measure of the moods

When we study the nature of love existing between a pair of lovers, we clearly see that it removes gradually the consciousness of difference based on their knowledge of their separate powers. Similarly, it removes by degrees from the mind of the spiritual aspirant engaged in the Sadhana of any mood, his consciousness of God's unlimited powers and teaches him to regard God as but his beloved according to his peculiar mood. Therefore the aspirant treading this path makes Him entirely his Own by means of love and does not at all hesitate to request, importune, or scold Him or otherwise show Him his feeling of wonderful love. The more the practice of one of these five moods enables the aspirant to forget the powers of God and experience nothing else but His love and sweetness, the more exalted is it regarded in this Sadhana of moods. It is only from this point of view that the teachers of devotion have ascertained the various differences between the five moods and have assigned the highest place to the Madhura Bhava; otherwise each one of them is, as those teachers have unanimously admitted, capable of making the aspirant realize God.

9. The devotional scriptures and the life of Sri Ramakrishna teach us that with the help of each one of these moods man can ultimately realize the

non-dual Reality

It is known from the study of the history of religions that, with the ultimate development of each of the five moods, the aspirant forgets himself and feels happy when his beloved is happy. Absorbed in thought of Him during the time of separation from Him, he sometimes loses even the consciousness of his own existence. From the study of devotional books like the *Bhagavata,* it is seen that not only did the Gopis of Vraja forget in this way their own existence but actually felt on occasions identified with their beloved Krishna. It is well known from the devotional books of the Christians that, absorbed in the thought of the Passion of Christ, some mystics bore the stigmata and bled from those marks on their bodies.[1] Therefore we find that with the final development of each one of the five moods, the aspirant becomes absorbed in the thought of his or her Object of love and, united and identified with Him under the strong impulse of love, realizes the non-dual state of consciousness. Sri Ramakrishna's unique life of spiritual striving has thrown wonderful light on this matter. He practised each of the five spiritual loving moods and in each of them he became merged in the Object of his love and absolutely forgetting his own existence, realized the non-dual Reality.

How, it may be asked, can the human mind experience, with the help of these moods, the Reality of non-duality, which is beyond all moods? For no mood can ever rise, exist or develop in the human mind without the consciousness of two persons.

10. The objection and answer regarding the attainment of the non-dual Reality with the help of the five moods

Quite true. But, the more a mood develops the more does it spread its own influence and remove gradually from the aspirant's mind all contrary ideas. Again, when it is fully developed, the concentrated mind of the aspirant sometimes in meditation forgets I (the servant) and Thou (the Master) and the relation between them and remains perfectly identified through love with the Reality denoted by the word Thou. The human mind, the eminent teachers of India say, is not simultaneously conscious of I and

Thou, and the loving relation between them. It knows the entity denoted by the word Thou one moment and that denoted by the word I the next moment and, because the mind oscillates quickly between the ideas of those two entities, there develops in it an idea of a relation between them. It then seems to be simultaneously conscious of those two entities and the relation between them. But when the restlessness of the mind is destroyed by the influence of the matured mood of love, it gradually becomes able to detect what has been said above. The more the functioning of the mind is stilled at the time of meditation, the more does it understand by degrees that it saw the one non-dual Reality from two angles of vision and mistook it for two independent entities.

11. The prevalence of the Sadhanas of different moods in different ages

One is simply amazed to think what a vast period of time and what superhuman efforts of numberless aspirants were necessary for the full development of each of the moods through which the human mind was enabled to realize the non-dual Reality. When we study the history of religions as embodied in the scriptures, it becomes clear that a particular mood became the principal prop of the human minds during meditation in a particular age; and with the help of it many eminent aspirants of that age realized God and a rare few gained the immediate knowledge of the non-dual reality of Brahman. We meet with the final development of the Santa mood mainly in the Vedic and Buddhistic ages, with the non-dual mood as the ultimate development of the Santa, and also the moods of the Dasya and the Apatya[1] in the Upanishadic age, with the moods of the Santa and the Dasya mixed with motiveless action in the Epic age, with the Apatya and the partial Madhura in the Tantric age, and with the moods of the Sakhya, the Vatsalya and the Madhura in the Vaishnava age.

12. What is seen regarding the full development of the five mood in India and in other countries

While the full manifestation of all the five moods together with the non-dual mood is thus found in the history of the religions of India,

manifestations of the Santa, Dasya and Apatya only are found in the religious communities of other countries. Though the songs of King Solomon, the royal sage, expressing the friendly and sweet moods in relation to God are intact in the Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities, the members of these communities are unable to understand the import of those songs and attribute a different meaning to them. The moods of Sakhya and Madhura are, it goes without saying, extant to a great extent in the Sufi community professing Islam, yet the generality of the Muslims regard such worship of God as contrary to the precepts of the Koran. Again, though the worship of the Mother of the universe in the image of Mary, the mother of Christ, is extant, in an obscured form, in the Catholic Christian community, it is not directly connected with the idea of God as Mother. It has, therefore, not been as fruitful as the worship of the universal Mother extant in India and has not enabled the aspirant to realize the indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute and to experience the divine manifestation in all women without exception. The current of the idea of the Motherhood of God has disappeared midway like the river Phalgu.[1]

13. What indicates the depth of the aspirant's mood

When the mind of the aspirant is attracted to God with the aid of some loving mood, it becomes, as we have said before, gradually absorbed in that mood, turns away from the external world and merges itself in the self. At the time of the mind's merging, its past impressions stand in its way and try to make it swim on the surface, pushing it upwards again and again. Therefore ordinary human minds with powerful past impressions, cannot generally become absorbed even in one mood, even by a whole life's effort. When that happens, they at first become discouraged and give up the effort and at last, losing faith in the Object to be attained, come to consider the enjoyment of sights, tastes, etc., of the external world to be the only thing worth having, and pursue it again. Aversion for outward things, absorption in the meditation of the Object of love and the ecstasy produced by one's spiritual mood are, therefore, regarded in the sphere of the devotional Sadhana as the measure of the aspirant's progress towards the goal.

14. What occurs to one's mind when one sees the Master attain success in all the moods

One who has not made an attempt to be absorbed in any one of the moods and has not therein met with strong obstacles due to past impressions hidden in the mind, will not at all understand the inward struggle in the aspirant's mind. He alone who has done it will know what sufferings have to be undergone before that merging in spiritual love takes place, and only he will be astonished to see Sri Ramakrishna attaining in a short time an extraordinary merging in all the devotional moods, one after another, and feel that it is not possible for mere human power to attain such a state.

15. A discussion on the lack of records of the spiritual practices of the spiritual heroes

Is it because the ordinary human mind was not able to understand the subtle truths of the spiritual realm that the history of the practices of the spiritual heroes, who are known as the incarnations of God, has not been adequately recorded? For, a detailed discussion on the detachment from and the renunciation of the world at the time of their undertaking discipline, and the wonderful power manifested through them after their success in it for the good of the human minds which are deluded by worldly objects, are the only things found in that history. We find given there only a slight indication of the extraordinary inward struggle in which they were engaged during the period of their striving for the purpose of destroying and uprooting the deep impressions in their minds and securing mastery over themselves. Or, that struggle has been described in that history with the help of metaphors and hyperboles in such a way that it has become quite impossible for us to find out the grain of truth in that description. The reader will understand what we mean when we give a few examples.

16. This statement is applicable equally

(1) to Krishna

Sri Krishna was engaged on many occasions in performing austerities with a view to acquiring particular powers for the purpose of doing good to humanity. But no description of the succession of the moods of his mind is found except that he remained for some time standing on one leg living on water or air alone.

(2) to Buddha

We do not get so detailed an account of Buddha's striving as of his detachment from the world, his leaving home for the purpose of becoming an anchorite and, afterwards, his establishing Dharmachakra, the wheel of religion. But, a little of the history of his spiritual moods is available, unlike in the instance of other spiritual heroes. It is recorded that abstaining from food and drink and having the firm resolve to succeed, he was engaged in practising austerity and meditation for six long years without leaving his seat; and controlling the internal vital forces and practising the meditation he entered into Samadhi. But, while recording his struggle during that period with the past impression hidden in his mind, his biographer has, with the help of gross external events, introduced a story of his fight against Mara.[1]

(3) to Jesus

The history of the striving of Jesus is also not available. After recording a few events of Jesus' life till he was twelve, his biographer has described how, in his thirtieth year, Jesus was baptised by John, a perfect holy man, and entered alone a lonely desert where he practised austerity and meditation for forty days; how, though tempted by Satan, he came out victorious and returned from there; and how at last he engaged himself in doing good to humanity. He continued to be in the gross body for three years only after that event. There are, therefore, no records whatever of how he spent his time from the twelfth to the thirtieth year of his life.

(4) to Sankara

Although a good deal of the sequence of events in Sankara's life is found, one has very often only to infer the history of the moods of his mind.

and (5) to Chaitanya. Sri Ramakrishna on the ultimate truth of the Madhura Bhava

Many events of the Sadhana of Chaitanya are found recorded; the story of his exalted love of God, devoid of the slightest tinge of desire, has been described in a way unintelligible to the ordinary minds, in the form of metaphors with the help of the stories of the love between Radha and Krishna and their separation from each other. And it has to be admitted that Chaitanya and his chief companions have recorded in some detail, though in metaphorical language, the changes that came upon the mind of the aspirant from the inception to almost the ultimate perfected state of each of the spiritual moods of Sakhya, Vatsalya and Madhura, with especial emphasis on the last. But they have not given out the ultimate truth that when the aspirant's mind becomes completely absorbed in any of the aforesaid three moods, it experiences its oneness with the Object of its love and merges in the non-dual Reality. The unique life of Sri Ramakrishna and the extraordinary history of his Sadhana have taught us that ultimate truth very clearly in the modern age and enabled us to understand that all the religious moods of all the religious communities of the world bring the mind of the aspirant to one and the same goal. Leaving aside all the other things that may be learnt from his life, it may be said here that the whole world is undoubtedly eternally indebted to him for the wonderful width of spiritual vision indicating the universality of religion that we have gained through his grace.

17. The Madhura Bhava and the Vaishnava teachers

The Madhura Bhava is said to be the greatest contribution of the Vaishnava teachers like Chaitanya to the spiritual world. Had they not shown the way, so many people could not have resorted to it for God-realization and been endowed with peace and pure bliss. They were the first to understand that the Vrindavan Lila of Sri Krishna was not acted in vain

and to make efforts to explain it to others. But for the advent of Chaitanya, Vrindavan would have been regarded as an ordinary forest.

18. An objection to the historicity of the Lila at Vrindavan and the refutation thereof

Endeavouring, in imitation of the West, to record only outward events the historians of the modern age will say, “But there is no evidence that the play of Vrindavan actually took Place as you say. Therefore, don’t you see that so much of your joy and sorrow, and the moods including the Mahabhava, are all without a basis?” The Vaishnava teachers may say in reply, “How can you either produce sure evidence that what we cite from the Puranas did not take place? Until we get the proof that your history has undoubtedly opened the door to that very ancient age, we shall say that your doubt itself is unfounded. Moreover, even if you should ever produce such proof, no harm will touch our faith. It will not affect at all the eternal play in the eternal Vrindavan of the divine Lord. That mystery of the divine play in the ideal spiritual realm will eternally remain uniformly true. If in the realm of Consciousness you desire to witness the divine play of love between Radha and Krishna, which belongs to that same realm, become first of all free from the slightest tinge of lust in body, mind and speech and learn to perform selfless service by following in the footsteps of any one of the female friends of Srimati Radha. You will then see that Sri Vrindavan, the playground of Sri Hari, is eternally there in your heart and that the said play is being enacted with you every day.”

19. In order to understand this play at Vrindavan, it is necessary to comprehend the history of devotional moods; what the Master said about it

He who has not learnt how to be independent of external events and how to study with a pure heart the history of the devotional moods by a thorough acceptance of the ideal world as real, will never be able to enjoy the beauty and sweetness of His play at Vrindavan. While Sri Ramakrishna was describing that play of the Divine with great enthusiasm to the English-educated young men who were with him, he found that they did not relish it

and he said, “Why don’t you mark and grasp the attraction of Srimati’s heart to Krishna in that divine play? When one has that kind of attraction to God, one realizes Him. Just see how mad the Gopis were for Krishna, renouncing their all— husbands, children, family and propriety of conduct, honour and dishonour, shame and aversion, fear of public opinion and of society and so on! When one can be so, one realizes the divine Lord.” “If”, continued he, “one is not free from the least tinge of lust, one cannot understand the spiritual mood of Radha, the embodiment of Mahabhava. As soon as they saw Krishna, the embodiment of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, the Gopis felt a joy in their hearts, tens of millions of times greater than sexual pleasure; they then lost their body-consciousness. Ah, could the idea of the sex-enjoyment by the contemptible body cross their minds then? Divine light came out of Sri Krishna’s body and touched their bodies, producing infinitely greater pleasure, in every pore of their bodies, than that of sexual enjoyment.”

At one time Swami Vivekananda raised an objection in regard to the historicity of the play of Radha and Krishna at Vrindavan and made an attempt to prove its unauthenticity. The Master said in reply, “Very well, let us take for granted that there was never any one called Radha and that some loving Sadhaka had an imaginary conception of Radha’s personality. But while picturing that character, the Sadhaka, you must admit, had to lose himself completely in Radha’s mood, and thus he became Radha. It is therefore proved that the play at Vrindavan was thus enacted in the outer world also.”

Indeed, though innumerable objections regarding the divine Lord’s play of love at Vrindavan may be raised, the Madhura Bhava first discovered by the Vaishnava teachers led by Chaitanya and others and manifested in their pure lives, will remain eternally true. At all times, the aspirant, fit for it, will attain the hallowed vision of the divine Lord, feel blessed by looking on Him as husband and himself as wife and, with the final development of that mood, be also established in the pure, non-dual Brahman Itself.

20. The reason why Chaitanya induced man, the sterner sex, to practise the Madhura Bhava

Although for women it is easy and natural to attribute husbandship to the divine Lord and undergo the discipline accordingly, it appears to be unnatural for those who have male bodies. The question, therefore, naturally arises in one's mind why Chaitanya introduced such an unbecoming discipline in the world. It has to be said in reply that all the actions of the incarnations of an age are done for the good of humanity. That path of Sadhana was introduced by Chaitanya for the same purpose. He made the aspirants advance on the path of the Madhura Bhava, keeping in mind the spiritual ideal which the then aspirants were for a long time eager to realize. It cannot be a fact that the eternally perfect Chaitanya, an incarnation of God, engaged himself in practising that mood for his own good and established it as a perfect ideal in society. Sri Ramakrishna said, "Just as the external teeth (tusks) of elephants are for attacking their enemies, and the internal ones for masticating food and maintaining their bodies, so two kinds of moods were manifested in Sri Chaitanya, the one inward and the other outward. He did good to humanity with the help of the outward mood of Madhura Bhava, and being himself established in Brahman Itself as the ultimate development of the love for God, enjoyed personally the immense bliss in the inward mood of non-duality."

21. The spiritual condition of the country of that time. How Chaitanya improved it

Antiquarians say that there arose in this country the teachers of the Vajra-yana at the end of the Buddhistic Age. They preached that, having attempted to realize Nirvana, the final beatitude, and having almost been freed from the clutches of desires, the human mind went forward to merge in the great void with the help of meditation. But then "Niratma", the goddess of non-existence, appeared before it and, instead of allowing it to do so, kept it united with her own body. Thus, though the gross body in which the aspirant enjoyed worldly objects did not then exist, she made him daily enjoy the aggregate of the essences of sensuous pleasures, inasmuch as he was even then possessed of a subtle body. Therefore it was no wonder that the doctrine preached by them of the attainment of the ultimate subtle enjoyment of the ideal world by the renunciation of the enjoyment of gross

objects, should have become distorted in later ages; that the attainment of the constant enjoyment of the gross objects should have been made the goal of religion; and that it should have increased adultery in the country. At the time of the advent of Chaitanya, the uneducated people of the country adopted that distorted Buddhistic doctrine and were divided into various secret sects. The pure Vamachara, spoken of in the Tantras, became distorted even among most of the higher classes and the quest of miraculous powers and enjoyment of sensuous pleasure by the motivated worship of and meditation on the universal Mother came into vogue. And, desirous of having unlimited bliss in the spiritual world with the help of the devotional moods, the true aspirants of that age were not able to find a way. Chaitanya at first placed before those aspirants the ideals of extraordinary renunciation and detachment by practising them in his own life, and afterwards pointed out that if one became pure and holy and looked upon oneself as a woman and upon God as one's husband, one can truly realize the unlimited divine bliss in the subtle ideal world. Moreover, he preached the glory of God's names to the people in general and induced them to repeat continually His names and sing aloud His praise. Many Buddhistic sects that had not got corrupted and fallen from the ideal were thus placed by his grace on the true spiritual path again. Though the groups of the followers of the distorted Vamachara at first opposed him openly, they felt the extraordinary attraction of the unique ideal of his life, became self-denying and tried to have the vision of the universal Mother through motiveless worship. Therefore, while recording the events of the extraordinary life of Chaitanya, some writers wrote that the Buddhists, the upholders of the doctrine of the void, also rejoiced at the time of his birth.[1]

22. The main point of the Madhura Bhava

Sri Krishna, the supreme Self, the embodiment of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, is the only Purusha,[2] the Male principle and all the Jivas and creatures, both gross and subtle, are Parts of Prakriti, the embodiment of supreme love, and are therefore, His wives. So, if Jivas become pure and holy and whole-heartedly worship Him as their husband, they attain by His grace liberation and unlimited bliss, the goal of their lives. This is the long

and short of the Madhura Bhava preached by Chaitanya. All the other devotional moods are included in the one great mood, the Mahabhava, of which the chief Gopi Radha is the embodiment. Each of the other Gopis is an embodiment of one, two or more moods comprised in the great mood. The aspirant is thus enabled to master the moods comprised within the Mahabhava by engaging himself in Sadhana in imitation of the Gopis of Vraja, and at last becomes blessed through a flash of the great bliss arising from the great mood. The ultimate aim of an aspirant on this path is to become happy in all respects at the happiness of Krishna, by giving up all desires for his or her own happiness once for all, through the contemplation of the mood of Radha, the embodiment of the Mahabhava.[1]

23. One should have that all devouring love for God, which a paramour has for her lover

The love between a pair of lovers, married according to the rules of society, flows restrained by external conditions such as birth, family, virtuous conduct, fear of society and public opinion. Such a pair live within the bounds of these rules and undergo sacrifices for each other's happiness, keeping in mind various things that should or should not be done. Desirous of properly observing the hard and fast social rules, the married woman does not hesitate on many occasions to check or limit her relation of love with her husband. But the loving behaviour of a paramour is different. On account of the impulse of love, such a woman very often tramples down the bondage of those rules underfoot and does not hesitate to unite with her lover even giving up all the rights granted her by society. The Vaishnava teachers have advised the aspirants to assume for themselves that alldevouring loving relation towards God. Therefore, though Radha, the supreme lady of Vrindavan, is the married wife of Ayan Ghosh, she has been described as one who renounced her all for the love of Krishna.

24. The Madhura Bhava is the aggregate of all other moods plus something

The Vaishnava teachers have described the Madhura Bhava as the aggregate of the essences of the other four moods and something more. For the loving woman serves her lover like a slave, gives good counsel under all circumstances like a friend, feeling happy at his happiness and miserable at his afflictions, and engages herself like a mother in nourishing his body and mind and thinking of his welfare in all respects. Thus, wholly effacing her own personality, she occupies herself in entertaining her lover's mind and in bringing all kinds of comforts to him and thus keeping him flooded with extraordinary peace and bliss. The woman who forgets herself under the influence of love and keeps a perfect eye on the welfare and the happiness of her lover is called in the devotional books the Samartha "the excellent" and her love is the best. All other kinds of love, tarnished with a tinge of selfishness, have been assigned to two other classes, viz., Samanjasa "the balanced" and Sadharani "the common". The woman of the former class minds her own happiness to the same extent as her lover's and she of the latter class regards her lover as dear for the sake of her own happiness only.

25. How Chaitanya did good to humanity with the help of the Madhura Bhava

Be that as it may, Chaitanya preached the glory of the names of God and taught the aspirants to guide their lives according to the ideal of austere renunciation and place themselves, in respect of love, in the position of the beloved of Krishna, and thus tried to stem the tide of adultery prevalent in the society at that time. His mode of devotion and instruction to the aspirants did endless good to humanity. It showed the right path to those who went astray, brought into the bounds of a new society those who were excommunicated and who were living outside the pale of castes, embracing them all within a new caste called the "devotees of God", and held the high and pure ideal of renunciation and detachment before all the communities. However, that is not all. He proved beyond doubt that all the mental and physical changes called the "eight Sattvika Vikaras"[1] (whose Tamasika counterparts are produced by the love and union of ordinary pairs of lovers) actually came on the aspirant of pure mind in virtue of the intense meditation and contemplation on the Divine Husband, the Lover of the

Universe. This converted, at that time, the Alankara Sastra, the science of Rhetoric, into a spiritual scripture; and giving the sensual poetic and dramatic literature the colour of spiritual love, made it palatable to spiritual aspirants and conducive to their progress. It thus made the path of discipline easy for them to follow by teaching them to requisition poetry and romance for the purpose of making the divine Lord their very own and to turn even the baser passions of lust, anger, etc., on to Him, passions that had by all means to be shunned during the practice of Santa Bhava, the devotional mood of calmness.

26. How a Vedantin accepts the Sadhana of the Madhura Bhava as conducive to an aspirant's well-being

Although in the eyes of modern youths the Madhura Bhava appears to be unnatural and unbecoming for those who have male bodies, it does not take long for a Vedantin to ascertain its proper value. He knows that as the result of a very long habit, all thoughts are converted into Samskaras in the human mind and that it is owing to these impressions that man perceives a diverse universe which really is the one non-dual Brahman. If he can, by the grace of God, really look upon the universe this very moment as non-existent, it will immediately disappear into the void from before his senses. The universe exists for a man only because he thinks it exists. I am a man, only because I look upon myself as one and another is a woman because she regards herself as a woman. Again, it is a matter of daily experience that, when one mood becomes predominant in the human mind, it veils and gradually destroys all the other contrary ones. Therefore, an aspirant's effort to veil and gradually destroy all the other moods of his mind by virtue of the prevalence of the Madhura Bhava assumed by him towards God, is looked upon by the Vedantin as similar to the effort of "removing the thorn in one's foot with another". The consciousness of "I am possessed of a body", which is the basis of all other impressions of the human mind, and the firm belief, "I am a man or a woman", on account of one's contact with that body, are two Samskaras that are most powerful. When the male aspirant is able to forget his male nature by attributing the nature of the husband to the divine Lord and of the wife to himself, he, it is needless to

say, can very easily throw off as well the mood “I am His wife” and reach the state beyond all moods. Therefore a Vedantin finds it quite reasonable that an aspirant, when perfect in the discipline of the Madhura Bhava, should arrive very near the plane transcending all moods.

27. The ultimate aim of practising the Madhura Bhava is to attain the loving mood of Radha

Is the aim of the aspirant, it may be asked, the realization of the devotional mood of Radha? Although the Vaishnava teachers, it may be said in reply, deny it to begin with and say that the mood of only a, friend of Radha is attainable and that her own is not; it is inferred that the latter is the ultimate aim of the aspirant. For, the difference between the mood of Radha and that of her friends is one of degree and not of kind. Like Radha, her friends also worshipped Krishna, the embodiment of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, as their husband and tried to bring about the union between Radha and Krishna in order to make the latter happy, inasmuch as He, they saw, felt most happy when united with Her. Again, we see that, although Rupa, Sanatana, Jiva and other early Vaishnava teachers spent their lives at Vrindavan in the service of different images of Krishna, they did not try to install an image of Radha by the side of Krishna. It is inferred from this fact that they did not do so, only because they considered themselves to be in the position of Radha.

Those who want to study in detail the Madhura Bhava, spoken of in the Vaishnava books, should go through the writings of the early Vaishnava teachers like Rupa, Sanatana, and Jiva, and also the poems of the Vaishnava poets like Vidyapati and Chandidas on *Purvaraga* (the dawning of the divine love), *Dana* (offering or dedication), *Mana* (the affected rejection of the Beloved’s endearment due to excess of emotion), *Abhimana* (the wounded feeling of love) and *Mathur*[1] (pangs of separation). We have discussed the essentials of the Madhura Bhava here, because it will make it easy to understand what wonderful zenith of excellence the Master reached in the practice of that mood.

Footnote

1. Vide Life of St. Francis of Assisi, and of St. Catherine of Sienna.

1. Apatya, i.e., the mood of looking upon God as father or mother, here as father.—Tr.

1. A semi-mythical river.—Tr.

1. The Buddhistic Satan.—Tr.

1. *Chaitanya-mangala*.

2. Purusha: Existence-Knowledge-Bliss as the subject, the knower, the enjoyer; Prakriti: Existence-Knowledge-Bliss as the object, the known, the enjoyed. Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute means pure or absolute consciousness, when the will (which being a mode of consciousness, is not anything other than consciousness), is not active or is not cognized. When the will is active or is cognized, the same pure consciousness appears, or is viewed as, split in two, the subject and the object, and is talked of in terms of love, when the bliss-aspect is emphasized.—Tr.

1. The state in which one fears lest any harm should befall Krishna, even when he is happy, and hence cannot remain patient for even a moment, is the Rudha stage of the Mahabhava, i.e., the stage in which the Sattvika Vikaras have reached almost the highest point. The Adhirudha stage of the Mahabhava is the highest point of the Rudha stage; it is that stage of bliss and pain, arising respectively from the union with and separation from Krishna, of which all the happiness existing in crores of universes and also the pain produced by the biting of all the snakes and the stinging of all the scorpions are just a drop in the ocean, so to say. The last mentioned state of the Mahabhava has two characteristics; firstly,. Modana i.e., gladness to be found in the friends of Radha only. Secondly, Madana, 'inebriation' which is the completest efflorescence of all the Sattvika emotions and bodily changes to be found only in Radha.

—The Bhakti-granthavali of Sri Viswanath Chakravarty.

1. The Sattvika changes are those that shake the body and the mind. They are eight in number, namely, motionlessness, perspiration, horripilation, indistinctness of utterance, tremor, paleness, tears, and loss of consciousness. They are arranged in five grades, according as they give greater and greater enjoyments, taking their nomenclature from the blazing of fire, viz. smoking, smouldering, flaming, glowing and incandescing.

1. These songs on the pangs of separation are collectively named Mathur, or associated with Mathura, because the Gopis of Vrindavan experienced those intense pangs when Krishna left for Mathura, from where He never returned.—Tr.

CHAPTER XIV
THE MASTER'S SADHANA OF THE MADHURA BHAVA

1. The natural inclination of the Master's mind since childhood was to merge in spiritual moods

The Master was accustomed to remaining absorbed in any mood, whensoever it arose in his pure and one-pointed mind. That mood fully occupied his mind for the time being and wiped off all other moods and converted his body into a perfect instrument suitable for its manifestation. When we study his life, we get acquainted with this nature of his mind since his childhood. We observed this nature of his, almost daily, when we were visiting Dakshineswar. While he was merging in any particular spiritual mood as the result of his listening to devotional music, or for some other, reason, he, we found, felt in his mind extreme pain if anyone sang or talked of any other mood. He experienced that pain because, it is needless to say, the course of the modifications of his mind, directed towards one point, was suddenly checked. Patanjali, the great thinker, has called that state of the mind Savikalpa-samadhi in which there is only one particular current of modifications round one object. The same has been described as Bhavasamadhi in devotional scriptures. This shows that the Master's mind was accustomed to merging in that kind of ecstasy from his childhood.

2. What changes were brought in his mind during his Sadhana

The above-mentioned characteristic of his mind took an extraordinary new turn from the time he commenced his spiritual practices. For, whereas, before, his mind was found to remain in one mood only for a short time and

then to change into another, now, once inducted into one mood, it always dwelt in it till it experienced its ultimate limit, getting at last a glimpse of the non-dual consciousness beyond. As examples of this fact it may be said that, until he reached the furthest limit of the Dasya mood, he did not try to practise the Apatya, looking upon God as a parent (mother); again, he did not engage himself in the practices of the Vatsalya and the Madhura Bhava before he had the final experience of the Apatya, as taught by the Tantras. Instances of this can be easily multiplied if we study the events of the time of his Sadhana.

3. The Madhura Bhava was not to the Master's liking before the time of his Sadhana of that mood

When the Brahmani came, the Master's mind was filled with the contemplation of the motherhood of God. At that time he saw the actual manifestation of the divine Mother in all creatures, sentient and insentient, in the universe, specially in all female forms. Therefore, we clearly understand the reason why he addressed the Brahmani as "mother" as soon as he saw her and fully believed himself to be her son, sat, at times, on her lap and took food out of her hand. Inspired by the devotional mood of the Gopis of Vraja, the Brahmani happened at times to sing songs conveying the idea of the conjugal relationship with God, when the Master said, we were told by Hriday, that he did not like that mood and requested her to stop them and sing instead songs expressive of the motherhood of God. The Brahmani rightly understood the Master's mood and started immediately singing songs indicative of the mood of the female attendant of the Mother of the universe; or she introduced songs full of the outburst of affection of Yasoda for her Gopala. These are, of course, events that occurred long before he became engaged in the discipline of the Madhura Bhava. So, it is evident that his was a transparent sincerity, absolutely unalloyed; as he himself used to say, "There is no swindling in the abode of my mind".

Anyway, we have seen how the Master's mind changed and how he came forward to practise the spiritual mood of the maternal affection for God. Now, therefore, let us begin to describe the practices he undertook when he engaged himself in the discipline of the Madhura Bhava.

4. No Sadhana of the Master was unscriptural. What it proves

Although the Master was almost wholly an "illiterate", as that word is ordinarily understood, a study of his life reveals how he maintained the authority of the scriptures all his life. The methods he undertook through the pure impulse of his heart even before he was initiated by any spiritual teacher, were all in accordance with the scriptures, and never contradicted them. These events of his life prove the fact that this will happen to all who are eager to realize God with a pure and holy heart, where "there is no swindling". And there is nothing to wonder at in this; for, a little thin-king will show that the scriptures have been compiled out of such experiences. The books that are called the Sastras are nothing but the records of the experiences of hearts like that of the Master, the results of their efforts for the realization of Truth. Therefore, the truth of the Sastras has been clearly proved by his extraordinary life inasmuch as the experiences recorded in them have been realized by the unlettered Master exactly as they are depicted. Swami Vivekananda pointed this out and said, "The reason of the Master's incarnating this time as an unlettered person is to prove the states and experiences recorded in the Sastras to be true."

5. Examples of the natural bent of the Master's mind to follow the scriptures, even unknowingly. The assumption of different names and robes at the time of Sadhana

As examples of the Master's maintaining instinctively the authority of the scriptures, we may mention here the different dresses that he put on, one after another, under the impulse of different moods. The seers have said through the Upanishads that one cannot attain perfection by Tapas only, without putting on external emblems.[1] It is seen in the life of the Master also that, impelled by his own heart, he put on the dress and other external emblems favourable to the practices of whatever spiritual mood he undertook at any time. For instance, he wore red cloth, ashes, vermilion and Rudraksha beads in order to attain success in practising the filial mood towards God, the Mother, described in the Tantras. At the time of his practices according to the devotional moods spoken of in the Vaishnava

books, he donned the well-known traditional Bhek, and adorned his body with white cloth, white sandal-paste, garlands of beads made of the holy basil, etc. Desiring to realize the non-dual mood taught by the Vedanta, he put on ochre dress and gave up his sacred thread and the tuft of hair on the crown of his head, and so on. Again, just as he assumed various male forms of dress at the time of practising the male moods, so he did not hesitate to adorn himself with the female forms of dress and ornaments while practising the female moods. The Master taught us many a time that one could not realize God till one gave up the eight ties of shame, hatred, fear and the egoism due to birth, family, good conduct, etc., which accompanied one from life to life. How far he himself followed that teaching in body, mind and speech, all his life can clearly be understood by a careful study of all his actions including the wearing of dress, ornaments, etc., at the time of his Sadhana.

6. Engaged in the practices of the Madhura Bhava, the Master put on female dress

Engaged in the practices of the Madhura Bhava, the Master became anxious to use clothes and ornaments proper to a woman. Knowing that desire of his, the greatly devout Mathur had the pleasure of adorning him now with a precious Sari, now with a skirt, a gauze scarf and a bodice. Desirous of making his female mode of dress perfect in all respects, Mathur decked him with a head of artificial hair and a set of gold ornaments. That gift of Mathur, we knew from a reliable source, gave evil-minded people an opportunity to calumniate the Master's austere renunciation. But he and Mathur did not pay any attention whatever to that censorious talk and proceeded towards their goal. Mathur was highly delighted at the satisfaction of "father", since he knew that he was not doing it all in vain. Adorned in such dress and ornaments, the Master gradually merged so much in the mood of the women of Vraja ever desirous to have the love of Krishna, that the consciousness that he was a male person disappeared altogether and every thought, word or movement of his became womanly. The Master, we were told by himself, was thus in a woman's dress for six months in the faith that he was the spiritual consort of God.

7. All the actions of the Master became womanly when he was in that attire

We have mentioned elsewhere the extraordinary coexistence in the Master of both manly and womanly temperaments. Is it, therefore, to be wondered at that, under the influence of the womanly dress, the temperament of the fair sex should be roused in him? But nobody could ever imagine that, under the urge of that mood, his movements, speech, smile, glance, gestures and other actions of body and mind would become completely womanly. But that all this did take place, however impossible it may appear, was borne out both by Hriday and the Master himself. When frequenting Dakshineswar, we saw him mimicking sometimes women's manners. These mimicries used to be so highly natural and perfect that even ladies were astonished to see them.

8. The Master's behaviour as a woman friend of the ladies of Mathur's family

At that time the Master sometimes went to the Janbazar house of Rani Rasmani and lived there in association with the ladies in the inner apartment. Those ladies already knew quite well his pure character free from the slightest tinge of lust, and looked upon him as a god. Besides, they were now so much charmed by his womanly deportment and his genuine care and affection for them that they regarded him as one of themselves and could not at all maintain their bearing of bashfulness, hesitation, etc., in his presence.[1] When the husband of any one of Mathur's daughters came to the Janbazar house at that time, the Master, we have heard it from himself, adorned her with attire and ornaments, dressed her hair, took her by the hand like a woman friend, teaching her various ways of entertaining her husband and making her sit beside her husband, returned from the room. He said, "Conscious that I was a woman friend of theirs they also did not at all feel uneasy."

9. While he was in a woman's dress, it was difficult to distinguish the Master from a woman

"When he remained thus surrounded by ladies," Hriday said, "it was difficult even for his very close relatives to recognize him quickly. One day at that time Mathur Babu took me to the inner apartment and asked, 'Can you say which of these, is your uncle?' Although I had lived with him for so long a time and had served him daily, I could not at once distinguish him from them. When during that period of his life at Dakshi-neswar, uncle used to pluck and collect flowers in the garden early in the morning every day with a flower basket in his hand, we carefully observed him and noticed that every time he started walking his left leg moved first, like that of a woman. The Bhairavi Brahmani used to say, 'I mistook him very often for Sri Radharani when I saw him plucking flowers in that manner.' Having plucked flowers and made variegated garlands of them, he then used to adorn Radha-Govinda every day and, having sometimes adorned the Mother of the universe also that way, he prayed imploringly to Her, as did the Gopis of Vraja to Katyayani, to let him have Krishna for his husband."

10. The Master's actions and his physical changes during his Sadhana of the Madhura Bhava

Desirous of having the vision of Krishna and of getting Him as his spiritual Husband, the Master now performed the service and worship of the divine Mother. He then engaged himself in the service of the holy feet of Krishna with an undivided mind, and spent his days in eager prayer and longing. That eager prayer in his heart never ceased at any time—neither during the day nor during the night. Days and months passed but despair or lack of faith never came to remove him an inch from that longing. That prayer became gradually converted into copious weeping and that longing into restlessness, an anxious pining away for the beloved and a sort of madness, making him give up food, sleep, etc. And how shall we describe the pangs of separation—that unbounded yearning for the complete union for all times without a break with one's darling of the heart, now cruelly obstructed by manifold barriers —yearning that churns one's heart's blood, plays havoc with one's mind and devastates one's body and sense-organs—how shall we describe the pangs produced by such a yearning? Why, they did not cease by simply manifesting themselves as agonizing mental modes

but also brought about again that unbearable burning pain and intense heat which he had felt all over his body during the early stages of his Sadhana. We have heard from the Master himself that drops of blood oozed out then at times from every pore of his body under the powerful sense of the separation from Krishna. All the joints of the body seemed slackened or almost dislocated, the senses completely desisted from functioning and the body lay motionless and unconscious sometimes like that of a dead man—all because of the extreme anguish of the heart.

11. A contrast between the Master's transcendental love and that conceived by us

We, men, eternally identified with a body and conscious of being that alone, understand by love the attraction of one body for another. Or if we go as the result of strenuous effort, just a little beyond the consciousness of the gross body and regard love as the attraction towards the aggregate of the noble qualities manifested in a particular body, we call it by the name of transcendental love and sing hallelujah over it. But it does not take one long to understand that this, our so-called transcendental love, eulogized by generations of poets, is not free from the consciousness of the gross body and subtle desires for enjoyment Ah, how worthless, insignificant and hollow that love appears in contrast with the true transcendental love manifested in the Master's life!

12. What the devotional scriptures say about Srimati's transcendental love

Srimati Radharani alone, the devotional scriptures say, realized the ultimate limit of the aforesaid transcendental love in her life and left its perfect ideal to the world. Nowhere in the whole range of devotional scriptures is to be found a peer for her, who, completely oblivious of bodily and mental comforts, could give up shame, hatred and fear, without caring in the least for social or popular opinion, and could trample upon the prestige due to birth, family, good conduct and respectable position, in order to feel happy in Krishna's happiness alone. Therefore, nobody in the world,

the scriptures say, can have even a partial experience of that love, (for the whole experience, they say, is not possible for Jivas) and have the vision of Krishna, but by the grace of Radha; for, Krishna, the embodiment of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, is eternally captivated by her love, which is devoid of the slightest tinge of lust, and fulfils the desires of devotees at her instance. The implication of the devotional scriptures referred to above is thus clearly brought out that, until one realizes the kind of love experienced by Srimati, the embodiment of transcendental love, one cannot have God as husband and feel the perfect sweetness of love.

13. Sri Gauranga came to exemplify the transcendental love of Srimati

Although the extraordinary glory of the love of Radharani for Krishna has been highly eulogized by Sukadeva, the chief of the Paramahamsas, and other self-controlled sages (who are supreme as the very embodiment, so to say, of freedom from Maya) the generality of the people of India did not know for a very long time how to realize it in life. In order to make people understand how to realize it, the divine Lord, the Vaishnava teachers say, had to incarnate Himself with Srimati in one and the same body and receptacle, as Krishna inside and Radha outside, in that extraordinary embodiment of His which is known as Gauranga. Thus Gauranga came on earth to do good to humanity by teaching the extramarital relation of love in the spiritual domain, with God as the lover. All the signs that were manifested in Radharani's body on account of her love for Krishna, also manifested themselves in Gauranga's body though male, owing to the power of his love for God. They asserted that Gauranga was Srimati because they saw the manifestation of all the signs of devotion in his body and mind produced by the Madhura Bhava. So, Sri Gauranga is the second example of that ideal of transcendental love.

14. The Master meditated on Radha and had her vision

Thus understanding that the attainment of the vision of Krishna was impossible without Radha's grace, the Master now applied himself thoroughly to gaining her favour. Lost in the remembrance and reflection of

her form, the very embodiment of love, he incessantly offered at her lotus feet the ardent emotions of his heart. Consequently, he was very soon blessed with the vision of the holy form of Radha, devoid of the slightest tinge of lust. He now saw that this form also disappeared into his own body like the forms of other deities when he had had their visions. “Is it ever possible”, said the Master, “to describe the glory and sweetness of that incomparable, pure, bright form of Radha who renounced her all for the love of Krishna? The splendour of her body was bright yellow like the pollens of Nagakesara (Mesua ferrea) flowers.”

15. The Master felt that he was Srimati. The reason thereof

From now on, the Master began to realize himself as Srimati in ecstasy. He completely lost the consciousness of his separate existence, on account of his profound contemplation of the holy form and character of Radha and through his ceaseless feeling of identification with her. Therefore, it can certainly be said that his love for God born of his Madhura Bhava developed into (and became as profound as) Radha’s. For, in reality, all the signs of the Mahabhava, which is the ultimate state of the Madhura Bhava, were manifested in him after his realization of the abovementioned vision, even as they were in Radha and Gauranga. The descriptions of the physical signs manifested during the Mahabhava are recorded in the books by the revered Vaishnava teachers. The Bhairavi Brahmani, and later Vaishnavacharan and other Sadhakas, well versed in the Vaishnava scriptures, were astonished to see the manifestation under the impulse of the Madhura Bhava, of those signs in the holy person of the Master and offered him their heart-felt worship and reverence. Speaking of the Mahabhava, the Master told us on many occasions, “It is written in the devotional scriptures that nineteen kinds of emotions manifested in one receptacle are together called the Maha bhava. The whole life of a man is required for the practice of one such emotion before he can attain perfection in it. Nineteen such moods were fully manifested all together here (showing his own body) in one receptacle.”[1]

16. Extraordinary changes came on the Master's body when he was in the mood of a woman

We have mentioned before that blood oozed out from every pore of the Master's body on account of the extreme anguish arising from the sense of separation from Krishna. It happened at that time, in the ultimate stage of the Mahabhava. He became so much absorbed in the constant thought of himself as a woman that he could not look upon himself as one of the other sex even in a dream. His body and senses functioned naturally like those of a woman.

17. That the mind creates the body is demonstrated from these bodily changes of his under the influence of strong emotions

The Vedanta teaches that the mind of man has created his body in its present form, and is reforming it every moment of his life by decomposing and re-composing it, with the help of intense desires. Though we are told of such a mastery of the mind over the body, we do not really comprehend or form an idea of it. This is because there is no object for the attainment of which we experience that kind of intense desire, under the influence of which the mind turns away from all other objects and concentrates itself on a particular one and thereby manifests extraordinary powers. The aforesaid teaching of the Vedanta, it is needless, to add, is clearly proved by the fact that the Master's body was so much changed in a short time on account of his intense desire to experience one particular object. Hearing the spiritual experiences of the Master and desiring to compare them with those of the perfected seers of past ages, Padmalochan and other eminent Pandits said to the Master, "Your experiences have gone far beyond those recorded in the Vedas and Puranas". One is amazed to study the physical changes of the Master under the influence of his strong emotions and has to remark that his bodily changes have gone beyond the facts so far discovered by physiology and indicate the beginning of a wonderful revolution in it.

18. The Master had the vision of Sri Krishna

As the Master's practising love of God-as-husband was now purified and intensified, he experienced in the above- mentioned way the grace of Radharani, the supreme Lady of Vraja and was finally blessed, shortly after, with the holy vision of Krishna, the embodiment of pure Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. This form of the vision also united with his holy person, like all the other forms seen before. Tota Puri, the Paramahamsa, came two or three months after the Master had had that vision and engaged him in the discipline of the non-dual spiritual mood well known in the Vedanta. Perfect in the practices of the Madhura Bhava, the Master was, it is clear, enjoying divine bliss in that mood for a short period. We have heard from the Master himself that at that time he lost himself completely in the thought of Krishna and sometimes regarded himself as Krishna, and regarded all beings, from Brahma down to a blade of grass, as forms of Krishna. When we were frequenting Dakshi-neswar and were in his company, one day he plucked a flower of grass, came to us with his face beaming with delight and said, "The complexion of Sri Krishna, I used to see then (at the time of practising the Madhura Bhava), was like this".

19. In his youth the Master desired to be born again as a girl

A desire under the impulse of the female mood used to arise in the Master's mind in his adolescence before he left Kamarpukur for Calcutta. Knowing that the Gopis of Vraja had Krishna, the embodiment of pure Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, as their spiritual husband through love, because they were born as women, he used to think that he too would have been blessed enough to love and have Krishna as husband, had he been born in a female form. Considering his male body to be an obstacle to his attainment of Krishna, he then imagined that were he to be born again, he would become a beautiful child-widow with long hair, in a Brahmin family and would not know any one except Krishna as husband. There would be some means of bare subsistence of coarse food and clothes, near the hut there would be a Katha[1] or two of land, wherein he would produce, with his own hands, some greens and vegetables for his own use. And there would be with him an elderly woman, as his guardian, a cow which he would milk himself and a spinning wheel. The imagination of the boy proceeded

further. He went on thinking that in the daytime, after finishing the household duties, he would spin yarn with that wheel, singing songs about Krishna, and after dusk would be ardently weeping in secret from a longing to feed Krishna with his own hands, with the sweets made of the milk of that cow; Krishna also would be pleased and, coming dressed as a cowherd, would eat them. This coming and going would be repeated daily without the knowledge of others.. Although that desire of his was not fulfilled in exactly that way, it came to pass in the aforesaid manner at the time of his practising the Madhura Bhava.

20. The Master realized, "The three—the scriptures, the devotees and the divine Lord, —are the One and the One is the three"

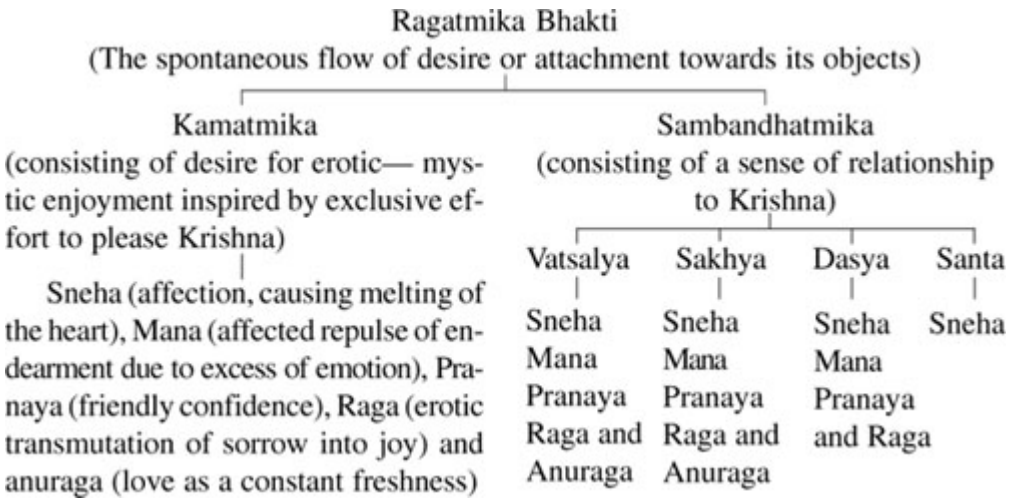
We shall conclude the present topic by recording another vision of the Master when he was enjoying the Madhura Bhava. One day during that period, while he was listening to the reading of the *Bhagavata* in front of the Vishnu temple he went into ecstasy and had the vision of Sri Krishna's luminous form. He saw that a beam of light like a cord, came out of His lotus feet and touched the book, whence it touched the Master's heart and remained simultaneously touching the three for some time. There arose from that vision the firm conviction in his mind that, although the three, viz., the scripture, the devotee and the divine Lord, appeared as different entities, they, the Master said, were one and the same thing; in other words, they were the manifestations of the same Reality. "The three—the Bhagavata (the scripture), the Bhakta (the devotee) and the Bhagavan (the divine Lord), are the One and the One is the three," he used to say.

Footnote

1. *Mundaka Upanishad*. 3. 2. 4. Self-realization is not possible by knowledge only without putting on the signs of Sannyasa, *e.g.,* ochre cloth etc.

1. III. 7.

1. The divisions of the Ragatmika Bhakti according to the Vaishnava teachers like Jiva Goswami are given below:



The aforesaid nineteen divisions (excluding calmness i.e., Santa) of the two kinds of love, viz., Kamatmika and Sambandhatmika, co-exist in one receptacle in the Mahabhava—this is what the Master said.

N.B.— We are indebted to Prof. S. K. De for the English translation of some of the above terms. —Tr.

1. i.e., 016 acre.—Tr.

CHAPTER XV
THE MASTER'S SADHANA OF THE VEDANTA

Perfected in the discipline of the Madhura Bhava, the Master now reached the zenith of the Sadhana of all the devotional moods. But before recording the history of his extraordinary spiritual striving henceforth it is good to study once his mental state at that time.

1. The study of the Master's state of mind during this time:

(1) his complete renunciation of lust and gold

If an aspirant wants to be successful in the discipline of any one of the devotional moods, he will, we have seen, have to do it by shunning sights, tastes, and other worldly objects of enjoyment. The saying of the perfected devotee Tulsidas, viz., "There is no selfish action where Rama is"[1], is really true. The history of the extraordinary striving of the Master bears out this fact. He had stood on the solid basis of the renunciation of lust and gold before he began practising the devotional moods. He could master in a short period whatever mood he practised at any time, only because he never deviated in the least from that basis. Therefore, we are to keep it clear before our mind that he was now incessantly dwelling in a region far beyond the bounds of the temptation of lust and gold.

(2) the discrimination between the real and the unreal; the dispassion for the results of action in this world and the next

As he was incessantly making efforts for God-realization for a period of nine years by renouncing the desire for the enjoyment of worldly objects, his mind now reached, through continual contemplation, such a state that the memory of anything, except God, appeared to it to be poison, As he understood and manifested in body, mind and speech, that the reality of God was the essence of essences and the ultimate of all ultimates, he was absolutely indifferent to and free from any desire for the attainment here or hereafter of any object except God.

(3) the six treasures of Sama, Dama, etc., and the intense desire for liberation

Forgetting all worldly things and the pains and pleasures of his body, he was now so much accustomed to the one-pointed meditation on his chosen Ideal that his mind would in a moment be withdrawn from external objects, get concentrated on It and enjoy the divine bliss. Days, months and years rolled on in that way, yet his bliss, the divine enjoyment, would not leave him even for a moment, nor could he ever lead himself to believe that there was anything but God in the world to be desired for.'

and (4) the dependence on God and the fearlessness arising from his visions of the divine Mother

And having unlimited devotion, faith and dependence on the universal Mother, the ultimate cause, as "the goal, the supporter, the lord, the witness, the abode, the refuge and the friend,"[1] the Master had not only bound himself to Her in eternal loving relations, but also accustomed himself thoroughly to perform without fear all actions of his life, big and small, at the command and hint of the divine Mother. For, he had had various proofs of the fact that, on account of absolute childlike dependence on the divine Mother, the aspirant sees Her always beside him, feels blessed in always hearing Her sweet words and protected by Her strong arms, and is enabled to tread fearlessly the path of the world.

2. What the Master said about his doing Sadhana even after the realization of God

Why did the Master, it may be asked, engage himself in discipline even after thus knowing the Cause of the universe as his own Mother and always seeing Her beside him? What was discipline for, when one realized that She was more than one's own—She, for whose realization all discipline, meditation, austerity, etc., on the part of an aspirant were needed? Although we discussed this question before from one point of view, we shall now say a few words on it from another. Sitting at the holy feet of the Master and listening to the history of his striving, one day we had that doubt in our mind and we did not hesitate to express it to him. We shall now describe here what he told us in reply. "Look here," said the Master, "just as one who always lives on the sea coast sometimes feels a desire to see what a variety and number of precious things lie hidden at the bottom of the ocean, which is said to be the mine of all gems, so also, although I realized Her and remained always beside Her, I felt a desire to enjoy the Mother, who is of innumerable forms and is the embodiment of endless relations, in as many forms and relations as She would be pleased to show me. Therefore, whenever I desired to see or enjoy Her in any particular form or relation, I persisted in praying importunately to Her to reveal Herself to me in that form or relation. The compassionate Mother on Her part made me personally do whatever was necessary and supplied me everything required and revealed Herself to me in that form and in that relation. It was thus that all the various disciplines were performed."

Perfected in the discipline of the Madhura Bhava, the Master, as we have seen, reached the ultimate plane of the Sadhanas of the devotional moods, when he felt the urge to perform the discipline of the non-dual mood which is beyond all moods and is well known in the Vedanta. We shall now begin to tell the reader how that urge came to the Master at the instance of the divine Mother and how he now realized Her formless, attributeless nature which is the Turiya state, the Absolute.

3. The Master's mother decided to live on the Ganga and came to Dakshineswar

The Master's aged mother was living at the Dakshineswar Kali temple when he began practising the non-dual mood. At the passing away of her eldest son Ramkumar, the bereaved old lady consoled herself with difficulty, looking endearingly on her other two sons. But, soon after, when it was rumoured that her dearest and youngest son Gadadhar had turned mad, her sorrow and grief knew no bounds. She had her son brought home and when his condition improved a little, through various kinds of treatment and performance of propitiatory rites, hope came to her again and the old lady had him married. But when Gadadhar returned to Dakshineswar after his marriage and his former state seized him again, the old lady could no longer control herself. Praying for the recovery of her son, she went first to the Siva temple in her own village and, afterwards, to the old temple of Siva at Mukundapur and undertook a fast unto death. When the great God, Mahadeva, told her in a vision that her son was in divine inebriation, she was reassured a little. Nevertheless, the world lost all its attraction to her and she came to her son at Dakshineswar shortly afterwards, determined to spend the rest of her life on the bank of the Ganga. For, what purpose would it serve her, she thought, to remain attached to the world in that old age when those for whom and with whom she was in the world were one by one leaving her and the world behind? We have already told the reader of Mathur's gift of the "mountain of food". Resolved to pass the rest of her life at Dakshineswar on the Ganga, the Master's mother, we infer, came to the Kali temple during that time. That resolve of the old lady was fulfilled and from that time she never returned to Kamarpukur but spent the remaining twelve years of her life near the temple, and passed away. Therefore there is no doubt that it was during his mother's stay at Dakshineswar, the Master was initiated into the Mantra of Rama by Jatadhari, received the image of Ramalala from him, and practised the moods of Vatsalya, Madhura, and the Vedanta, etc.

4. The Master's mother was untouched by avarice

We should like to tell the reader an event showing the complete lack of avarice on the part of the Master's mother. That event took place shortly after she came to Dakshineswar. Mathur, we have said above, was in full

charge of the management of the Kali temple at that time when he performed various acts of merit and was freely distributing a huge quantity of food. As there was no limit to his love, regard and reverence for the Master, he was always endeavouring to make some arrangements for the efficient continuance of the services to the Master even after his passing away. But he never ventured to speak it out on account of the glowing renunciation he saw in the Master. One day, he was landed in a great difficulty, when, to know the Master's mind he was consulting Hriday within his hearing about transferring an estate to him; for, as soon as a little of the talk reached his ears, the Master ran like one mad to beat him, saying, "Ah, you wretch, you want to make a worldly man of me!" But this idea never left Mathur; it was always burning in his mind. However, he found no opportunity to fulfil that desire of his. Thinking that such an opportunity was now afforded him on the arrival of the Master's mother, Mathur began endearing himself to her by calling her granny. He then started visiting her every day, spent some time in talking with her on various matters and soon became her great favourite. Later, one day, finding an opportune moment, he made an importunate request to her thus, "Granny, you have never taken any service from me. If you really consider me to be your own, please ask for anything you want". The simple-hearted old lady was in a great fix, for, even after a good deal of thinking she could not make out what she needed. In this predicament, she had to say, "My child, God bless you; through your affectionate care, I lack nothing at present. When I require anything, I'll ask you for it". So saying, the old lady opened her portmanteau and said to Mathur, "Look here, I have so many clothes and through your loving care I have no trouble about food and drink. You have arranged and are arranging everything; what then shall I ask you for?" But Mathur was not a person to drop the matter so easily. He repeatedly requested her saying, "Please ask for something." After a good deal of thinking, the Master's mother hit upon something she had need of. She said, "If you must give me something, please buy an anna worth of tobacco leaf, for I want tobacco ashes for my teeth." The worldly Mathur's eyes became wet, he saluted her and said, "Can any mother other than you give birth to such a self-denying son?" Saying so, he had the tobacco leaves purchased for her.

5. Haladhari gave up worshipping in the Kali temple; Akshay came

During the time of the Master's practising the Vedantic discipline, his paternal cousin Haladhari was in the service of Radha-Govinda at the Dakshineswar temple. He was senior to the Master in age and had some grasp of scriptures like the *Bhagavata.* He felt proud on that account. We have told the reader how he ridiculed the Master and said that his spiritual visions and states were due to the derangement of his brain; how, pained at it, the Master would run up to the divine Mother for consultation and how he was again and again consoled by Her, and how on one such occasion Haladhari used those words of ridicule, which sent the Master into ecstasy, during which he had the vision of a beautiful figure who instructed him to "remain in Bhavamukha". These events, we infer, came to pass shortly before he began practising the Vedantic discipline. Seeing the Master wear clothes, ornaments, etc., meant for ladies and live in the mood of a woman at the time of practising the Madhura Bhava, Haladhari concluded that he was devoid of Self-Knowledge. When Tota Puri, the itinerant Paramahamsa, came to Dakshineswar and lived there, Haladhari, we have heard from the Master himself, was living at the Kali temple and used to have discussion on the scriptures with him from time to time. One day when Tota and Haladhari were thus discussing the *Adhyatma-Ramayana* the Master had the vision of Rama along with Sita and Lakshmana. Tota came to Dakshineswar probably by the end of 1865. A few months after it, Haladhari retired from service as the worshipper of the Mother, owing to ill-health and other reasons, and Akshay, Ramkumar's son and the Master's nephew, was appointed in his place.

6. The reason that led the Master to practise the non-dual mood after he had attained perfection in Bhavasamadhi

It is the nature of a devotee that he never tries to realize the states of liberation, viz., Sayujya, identification with the divine Lord, and Nirvana, the bodilessness. He always tries to enjoy the glory of the various forms and noble qualities of God with the help of particular devotional moods. The saying of Ramprasad, the devotee of the Devi, "I don't like to become sugar, but want to taste it," is well known as the natural outburst of the

heart-felt emotion of the devotees. Therefore, the Master's effort to attain the non-dual state of consciousness beyond all devotional moods may appear to be unnatural to many. But, we should remember before we think thus that the Master was not now capable of taking the initiative in doing anything. The child of the divine Mother that the Master was, he now depended entirely and placed full reliance upon Her and felt highly delighted in being moved about and guided by Her any way at any time. The divine Mother, for Her part, took upon 'Herself all his responsibilities and, with a view to accomplishing a particular purpose of Hers, cast him, without his knowledge, into quite a new mould. By the decree of the universal Mother, the Master came to know that particular purpose of his life at the end of all his Sadhanas. And it was because of this knowledge that he bore with delight the great responsibility of doing good to humanity, thus thrust upon him by the divine Mother with whom he was fully one in love and for whose sake he kept himself just a little separate from Her.

7. The rationale of his effort to attain the non-dual mood at the end of his Sadhana of the devotional moods

From another standpoint also, the rationale of his practice of the non-dual mood, after his perfection in the discipline of the Madhura Bhava, is clearly brought out. The relation of the realm of devotional moods to that beyond them is one of effect to the cause. For, the immense bliss of the realm of non-duality, beyond the loving moods, limits itself and then manifests itself as the enjoyment of the bliss of the sight, touch, etc., of the realm of those moods. Where, then, except to the plane of non-duality, could his mind go, when he had reached the ultimate limit of the Madhura Bhava, which is the final stage of the realm of devotional moods?

Although the above argument is quite reasonable, the following event proves, however, that the Master launched on the practice of the non-dual mood only on the hint of the divine Mother.

8. Sri Tota puri arrived at Dakshineswar

Desirous of bathing in the confluence of the sea and Ganga, and of having the vision of Sri Jagannath at Puri, the itinerant teacher Tota came, wandering at will, from Central India to Bengal. He was merged in spiritual practices on the holy river Narmada, where he lived alone for a very long time and attained the immediate knowledge of Brahman along the path of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. The old monks of that place bear witness to this fact even now. When he realized Brahman in this way, a desire to wander at will arose in his mind and under the impulse of that urge, he now came to Eastern India and travelled from one place of pilgrimage to another. Content in themselves, the knowers of Brahman see the whole universe at all times other than that of Samadhi, as Only Brahman, as the manifestations through Maya of Brahman, and go on visiting temples, holy men and places of pilgrimage experiencing Brahman in them. Similarly, Tota, a knower of Brahman, began visiting the deities and holy places. He came to Dakshineswar on his way back to the north-western parts of this country after visiting the two places of pilgrimage mentioned above. It was not customary with him to spend more than three days in one place. He, therefore, came to the Kali temple to spend there three days only. He did not at first understand that, by Her inscrutable sport, the Mother of the universe brought him there in order to complete his own knowledge and to make Her own child practise Vedantic discipline with his help.

9. The Master and Tota Puri greeted each other. The Master had the divine instruction to practise Vedanta

Arriving at the Kali temple, Tota Puri came first of all to the big open portico of the Ghat. Wearing one piece of cloth only like all others, the Master was then absent-mindedly seated in a corner. As soon as Tota's eyes fell on the Masters face, radiant with austerity and beaming with the surge of devotion, he was attracted towards him and felt in his heart of hearts that he was not an ordinary person and that there were few who were so very fit for Vedantic Sadhana. Filled with curiosity and astonishment, Tota stepped forward and came up to the Master, thinking, "Ah, can there be such a fit aspirant for Vedantic discipline in Bengal which is saturated with Tantric practices?" Observing him carefully, he asked the Master of his own accord,

“You seem to be well qualified; do you like to practise Vedantic discipline?” The Master said in answer to the tall, naked mendicant with matted hair “I know nothing of what I should do or not; my Mother knows everything; I shall do as She commands.” Tota replied, “Then go, ask your mother and come back; for I’ll not stay here long.” Without saying anything in reply, the Master went slowly to the divine Mother’s temple. He was in ecstasy there when he heard Her words of advice, “Go and learn; it is in order to teach you that the monk is come here.”

10. Tota’s conception of the Mother of the universe

In a divine state of semi-consciousness, the Master then came to Tota, with his face beaming with joy and informed him of his Mother’s instruction. Knowing that She whom the Master called Mother, was the image of the Devi installed in the temple, Tota, though charmed with his childlike simplicity, thought that the attitude of his mind was due to ignorance and superstition. We may well infer that there appeared now a smile of pity and derision in the corners of Tota’s lips. For, his keen intellect did not have any great regard for the deities except the Isvara spoken of in the Vedanta as the distributor of the results of action, nor would he admit that for an aspirant with self-control, and given to the meditation of Brahman, the devotion to and worship of such an Isvara, apart from a mere faith in His existence, would answer all his needs. If this was his conception of Isvara, we can well guess his idea about Maya, the power of Brahman, consisting of the three Gunas. That is why the learned monk looked upon Her as but a delusion and did not feel any necessity for admitting the existence of Her personality, far less for worshipping or propitiating Her. He felt in his heart of hearts that the aspirant’s personal effort alone was what was necessary to liberate himself from the bondage of ignorance, and there was not the least utility in prayer for the benign grace of Brahman united with Its power, otherwise called Isvara. Consequently, he considered such persons as offer prayers, to be labouring under the influence of impressions born of ignorance.

11. The Master wanted to be initiated into Sannyasa secretly, — its reason

He, however, did not say anything about it to the Master and introduced other topics, thinking that the above-mentioned impressions of the Master's mind would very soon vanish when, initiated by him, he would begin practising the discipline of the path of knowledge. He said that the Master would have to give up his sacred thread and the tuft of hair on his head before the scriptural initiation into Sannyasa. The Master hesitated a little and said that he had not the least objection if it could be done secretly. But he would by no means be able to do it publicly, as it would deal a terrible blow to the heart of his old grief-stricken mother. The itinerant teacher understood the reason why the Master wanted to be initiated secretly and said, "Very well, I will initiate you in private when the auspicious moment comes". Then with a view to spending a few days in a suitable place he came to the beautiful Panchavati situated in the north of the temple garden and spread his seat there.

12. Rites preliminary to the initiation into Sannyasa were performed

Later, when the auspicious day arrived, Tota asked the Master to perform the Sraddha and other ceremonies for the satisfaction of his forefathers and when those rites were finished, Tota made him offer Pinda according to scriptural injunctions for the satisfaction of his own soul. For, from the time of being initiated into Sannyasa, the aspirant totally renounces the hope of and the right to the attainment of any of the worlds such as Bhur, Bhuva, etc. That is why the scriptures enjoin his offering Pinda to himself.

The Master offered himself without reserve to each one of those whom he ever accepted as his spiritual teachers and did their bidding with unlimited faith. Therefore, it is needless to say that he followed to the letter what Tota now asked him to do. He performed the Sraddha and other preliminary rites, kept the necessary fast, collected the articles according to the instruction of his teacher in the Sadhan-Kutir at the Panchavati and waited for the arrival of the auspicious moment.

When about two hours before day-break, the auspicious moment, the Brahma-muhurta, arrived, the Guru and the disciple met in the hut. The preliminaries finished, the Homa-fire was lighted. And the forest and gardens round the Panchavati reverberated the holy profound sound of the Mantras pronounced before taking the vow of utter renunciation for the sake of God— the vow that has come down in an unbroken line from the Guru to the disciple from the beginning of time till today and has kept India well-established in the position of a knower of Brahman. The delicate, affectionate bosom of the Bhagirathi of holy waters vibrating with the delightful touch of that sound felt an extraordinary infusion of a new life. She flowed dancing with joy, bearing as it were, through her murmurs to all quarters the gospel that, after the lapse of ages, a true Sadhaka of India was once more undertaking the vow of total renunciation for the good of the many of this country and of the world at large. The Guru was now ready to recite the Mantras and the disciple to repeat them carefully and to offer oblations to the lighted fire. The prayer-mantras were first uttered:

13. Prayer-mantras preliminary to the Sannyasa initiation

“May the truth of the supreme Brahman reach me. May the Reality having the characteristic of supreme bliss reach me. May the indivisible, homogeneous, sweet reality of Brahman manifest itself in me. O supreme Self, who art eternally co-existent with Thy power of revealing the Brahman-consciousness of all Thy children—Devas, human beings and others—I, Thy child and servant, am an especial object of Thy compassion. O great Lord, the destroyer of the evil dream of the worlds, destroy all my evil dreams, the perceptions of duality. O supreme Self, I offer as oblations my vital forces and, controlling my senses, I set my mind on Thee alone. O shining One, who directest every being, remove from me all blemishes that are obstacles to right knowledge and ordain so that the knowledge of Reality, free from absurdities and contraries, may arise in me. May all the things of the world—the sun, the air, the cool, pure water of rivers, grains like barley, wheat etc., trees etc., ordained by Thee, illumine and help me to attain the knowledge of Truth. Thou art manifested, in the world, O Brahman, as various forms with especial potency. I offer oblation to Thee

who art fire, with a view to achieving, through the purity of body and mind, the capacity to retain the knowledge of Reality. Be gracious."[1]

14. The purport of the Mantra of the Viraja Homa performed before initiation

Then began the Viraja Homa: " May the five elements, earth, water, fire, air, and ether, in me be purified. Freed from the blemishes produced by Rajoguna, by virtue of offering oblation, may I attain the nature of the Light of consciousness Itself—Swaha.

May the vital airs, Prana, Apana, Samana, Udana and Vyana in me, be purified. Freed from the blemishes produced by Rajoguna, by virtue of offering oblation, may I attain the nature of the Light of consciousness Itself — Swaha.

May the five sheaths, gross body, vital air, mind, intellect and bliss be purified. Freed from the blemishes produced by Rajoguna, by virtue of offering oblation, may I attain the nature of the Light of consciousness Itself —Swaha.

May the impressions produced in me by the objects, sound, touch, sight, taste, and smell be purified. Freed from the blemishes produced by Rajoguna, by virtue of offering oblation, may I attain the nature of the Light of consciousness Itself—Swaha.

May my mind, speech, body, actions, be purified. Freed from the blemishes produced by Rajoguna, by virtue of offering oblation, may I attain the nature of the Light of consciousness Itself—Swaha.

O person of red eyes, who dwellest in the body of fire and art capable of destroying the obstacles to the attainment of knowledge, do thou wake up; O fulfiller of desires, ordain that all obstacles to my attainment of knowledge be destroyed and the knowledge heard from the mouth of the Guru may perfectly arise in my mind; may everything that is in me be completely purified. Freed from the blemishes produced by Rajoguna, by virtue of offering oblation, may I attain the nature of the Light of consciousness Itself—Swaha.

A reflection of consciousness, I, who am of the nature of Brahman Itself, offer as oblation to fire all my desire of having wife, son, wealth, respect from people, beautiful body and so on, and renounce them all —Swaha."

15. The Master gave up his sacred thread and tuft of hair on his head and was initiated into Sannyasa

Many oblations were thus offered and the Homa was brought to an end by the disciple saying, "I give up from this moment the desire of attaining the Bhur and all other worlds; I assure all beings of the universe of freedom from fear on account of me." He then offered as oblation his sacred thread and the tuft of hair on his head, according to scriptural injunctions, and putting on a pair of Kaupinas and ochre cloth[1] given by the Guru according to the custom followed by successive generations of Sadhakas from the beginning of time, he sat beside Tota to receive instruction from him.

16. Tota urged the Master to remain identified with Brahman Itself

Tota, a knower of Brahman, now encouraged the Master to have recourse to the means of "Not this", "Not this", well known in the Vedanta and remain identified with Brahman Itself. He said to the Master:

"Brahman, the one substance which alone is eternally pure, eternally awakened, unlimited by time, space and causation, is absolutely real. Through Maya, which makes the impossible possible, It causes, by virtue of its influence, to seem that It is divided into names and forms. Brahman is never really so divided. For, at the time of Samadhi, not even an iota, so to say, of time and space, and name and form produced by Maya is perceived. Whatever, therefore, is within the bounds of name and form can never be absolutely real. Shun it by a good distance. Break the firm cage of name and form with the overpowering strength of a lion and come out of it. Dive deep into the reality of the Self existing in yourself. Be one with It with the help of Samadhi. You will then see the universe consisting of name and form, vanish, as it were, into the void; you will see the consciousness of the little I merge in that of the immense I, where it ceases to function; and you will have the immediate knowledge of the indivisible Existence-Knowledge-

Bliss as yourself: “The consciousness, with the help of which a person sees another, knows another, or hears another, is little or limited. Whatever is limited is worthless; for the supreme bliss is not there. But the knowledge, established in which a person becomes devoid of the consciousness of seeing another, knowing another, and hearing another is the immense or the unlimited one. With the help of that knowledge, one gets identified with the supreme bliss. What mind or intellect is able to know that which exists as the Knower in the hearts of all?”[1]

17. Tota’s behaviour at the Master’s failure to make his mind free from all functions. The Master’s attainment of the Nirvikalpa Samadhi

Tota tried to make the Master attain Samadhi on that day with the help of various arguments and conclusive quotations from the scriptures. The Master said to us that Tota girt up his loins, as it were, to make the experiences gained by him from his lifelong Sadhana, enter into the Master’s mind on that occasion and to put him immediately into the non-dual plane of consciousness. “After initiating me”, said the Master, “the naked one taught me many dicta conveying the conclusion of the Vedanta, and asked me to make my mind free of function in all respects and merge in the meditation of the Self. But, it so happened with me that when I sat for meditation I could by no means make my mind go beyond the bounds of name and form and cease functioning. The mind withdrew itself easily from all other things but, as soon as it did so, the intimately familiar form of the universal Mother, consisting of the effulgence of pure consciousness, appeared before it as living and moving and made me quite oblivious of the renunciation of names and forms of all descriptions. When I listened to the conclusive dicta and sat for meditation, this happened over and over again. Almost despairing of the attainment of the Nirvikalpa Samadhi, I then opened my eyes and said to the naked one, ‘No, it cannot be done; I cannot make the mind free from functioning and force it to dive into the Self’. Scolding me severely, the naked one said very excitedly, ‘What, it can’t be done!’ What utter defiance! He then looked about in the hut and finding a broken piece of glass took it in his hand and forcibly pierced with its needle-like pointed end on my forehead between the eye-brows and said;

‘Collect the mind here to this point’. With a firm determination I sat for meditation again and, as soon as the holy form of the divine Mother appeared now before the mind as previously, I looked upon knowledge as a sword and cut it mentally in two with that sword of knowledge. There remained then no function in the mind, which transcended quickly the realm of names and forms, making me merge in Samadhi.”

18. Tota examined whether the Master really attained Nirvikalpa Samadhi. His surprise

Tota remained sitting for a long time beside the Master who entered into Samadhi in the manner men tioned above. Then coming out of the hut silen tly, he locked the door up lest some one should enter the hut without his knowledge and disturb him. He took his seat under the Panchavati, not far from the hut and was awaiting the Master’s call to open the door.

The day passed into night. Slowly and calmly days rolled on. At the end of three days, when Tota did not still hear the Master’s call, he was filled with curiosity and astonishment and left his seat to open the door. With a view to knowing the condition of his disciple, he entered the hut and saw that the Master was sitting in the same posture in which he had left him and that there was not the slightest function of the vital force in his body, but his face was calm and serene and full of effulgence. He understood that the disciple was completely dead to the external world and that his mind, merged in Brahman, was calm and motionless like an unflickering lamp in a windless place.

Being versed in the mystery of Samadhi, Tota became astounded and thought, “Is this indeed true, that I see enacted before me? Has this great soul actually realized in a day what I could experience only as the fruit of forty years of austere Sadhana?” Filled with doubt, Tota applied his mind to the examination of the state of the Master and scrutinized minutely all the signs manifested in the disciple’s body. He examined especially whether his heart was beating and whether the slightest breath was coming out of his nostrils. He touched repeatedly the disciple’s body which was in a steady posture, like a piece of wood, firm and fixed. But, there was no sign of any change or modification, nor was there any return of normal consciousness.

Beside himself with joy and astonishment, Tota cried out, “Is it divine Maya? Is it in truth Samadhi? Is it the Nirvikalpa Samadhi, the ultimate result attained through the path of knowledge spoken of in the Vedanta? Ah, how very strange is the Maya of the Divine!”

19. Tota tried to bring the Master down from Samadhi

Tota then undertook the process of bringing the disciple back to the consciousness of the external world. Profound sounds of the Mantra, “Hari Aum”, filled the land, water and sky of the Panchavati.

We have described in another place,[1] how, attracted by the love of his disciple and desirous of making him firmly established in the Nirvikalpa plane of consciousness, Sri Tota spent here day after day and month after month and how, with the help of the Master, he had his own spiritual life made complete in all respects. We refrain, therefore, from repeating all that here.

Having lived continuously at Dakshineswar for eleven months, Tota started for the north-western parts of the country. There arose immediately after this event a strong determination in the Master’s mind to remain incessantly thenceforward in the non-dual plane of consciousness. We have told the reader elsewhere,[2] how he carried into practice that resolve, how he could remain continually for six months in that high plane of non-duality where even Adhikarika persons, who are only a little less than the incarnations of God, cannot dwell for a long time, not to speak of the ordinary Sadhakas, the Jivakotis; and how, at that time, a monk arrived at the Kali temple, and coming to know that humanity would be greatly benefited through the Master in the future, lived there for six months taking care of his body and saved his life by various means.

20. The Master cured Jagadamba Dasi of a fatal disease

We shall now mention a special event that happened in Mathur Babu’s life by the grace of the Master at that time and bring this chapter to an end. Mathur’s devotion to and faith in the Master had already increased enormously as a result of his seeing various wonderful divine powers

manifested in him. An event of this time confirmed and stabilised that devotion of his, making Mathur take absolute refuge in the Master for his entire life.

Mathur's second wife, Srimati Jagadamba Dasi, had an attack of dysentery. The disease gradually worsened so much that the well-known doctors and physicians of Calcutta at first felt anxious for her life and then gave up all hope.

Mathur, though born poor, was, we were told by the Master, exceedingly good-looking and it was because of this that Rani Rasmani gave her third daughter Karunamayi in marriage to him and, after her death, the youngest, Jagadamba Dasi. Therefore, immediately after his marriage, a profound change took place in his circumstances and within a short time he rose to be the right-hand man of his mother-in-law on account of his address and intelligence. We have already narrated how, after the death of Rani Rasmani, he acquired in a way the sole authority for the management of the Rani's property.

Not only was Mathur now going to lose his dearest wife Jagadamba Dasi, but he was on the point of being simultaneously deprived of the said authority over the management of his mother-in-law's property. It is, therefore, needless to say much about his mental condition when the doctors gave up the case as hopeless. He became extremely anxious and came to Dakshineswar and, after saluting the Mother of the Universe, went to the Panchavati in search of the Master. Seeing him in that bewildered condition, the Master asked him very affectionately to sit by him and made enquiries about its cause. Mathur fell at his feet, and with a choked voice, informed him everything with tears in his eyes, piteously saying again and again, "The worst is about to happen but, that apart, what grieves me most, father, is that I am going to be deprived of the privilege of serving you."

Filled with compassion on seeing the miserable plight of Mathur, the Master entered into ecstasy and said to him, "Don't be afraid, your wife will come round." The devout Mathur knew the Master as God Himself and so, at the Master's assurance, he was, as it were, brought back to life and took leave of him that day. On his return to Janbazar he found that there was a sudden change for the better in the condition of the patient. "Jagadamba Dasi," said the Master, "was gradually coming round from that day and her

sufferings from that disease had to be borne by this body (showing his own). As the consequence of bringing round Jagadamba Dasi, I had to suffer from dysentery and other diseases for six months."

Speaking of the wonderful loving service of Mathur to him, one day the Master referred to the aforesaid event and said to us, "Was it for nothing that Mathur served me for fourteen years? The divine Mother showed him various wonderful powers through (showing his own body) this. That is why he served so devotedly."

Footnote

1. There is no selfish action, where Rama is, and there is no Rama, where selfish action is. Like the sun and the night, the two do not co-exist - Tulsidas.

1. Gita, IX, 18

1. The purport of the *Trisuparna-mantra.*

1. Some among us say that Tota Puri gave the name “Ramakrishna” to the Master when he initiated him into Sannyasa. Others say that Mathuranath, who was a great devotee of the Master and served him whole-heartedly, called him first by that name. The first opinion seems to us to be reasonable.

1. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, 2. 4. 14.

1. III.8.

2. III.2.

CHAPTER XVI
EPILOGUE OF THE MASTER'S VEDANTA SADHANA AND HIS PRACTICE OF ISLAM

1. The severe disease of the Master and his unique behaviour at this time

Now the Master's strong body was shattered and he suffered from illness for a few months, either as a result of his curing the fatal disease of Jagadamba Dasi, as mentioned above, or of his superhuman efforts for six long months to dwell continually in the plane of the non-dual consciousness. We were told by him that he had then a severe attack of dysentery. His nephew Hriday engaged himself in nursing him day and night. Mathur placed him under the treatment of Gangaprasad Sen, the famous physician, and made special arrangements for his diet etc. Although his body was so severely ill, the extraordinary calmness and the incessant bliss enjoyed by his mind, freed from all body-consciousness, beggared description. His mind would separate itself from the body, the disease and all other objects of the world at the slightest suggestion,[1] and would soar to the far-away Nirvikalpa plane at once. No sooner did it hear the word Brahman, Self or Isvara than it merged in its content, forgetting all other things and its own separate existence for some time. Therefore, it is clear, that in spite of that severe pain in his body owing to the fury of the disease, he actually felt very little of it. But that pain due to the disease, we heard from the Master himself, brought down his mind at times from high planes of spiritual experience and made it conscious of his body. The Master said it was during this period, that the foremost of the Paramahamsas, the followers of the Vedanta, used to come to him. His room was then always reverberating with the sounds of their utterances on the discussion of the

Vedantic truths, “Not this, not this”, “Being-Revealing-Rejoicing”, “This Self in Brahman”[1], and so on and so forth. When, during the discussions of those high Vedantic dicta, they could not arrive at the right conclusion on any question, the Master had to become the umpire and decide it. Need we say that had he been always distracted like other people on account of the disease, it would never have been possible for him constantly to take part in those abstruse philosophical discussions?

2. The Master’s auditive experience when he was established in the non-dual state. The results of that experience

By the end of the period when he was continually in the Nirvikalpa plane, the Master had, we have said elsewhere,[2] a wonderful auditive experience, a realization—he was now commanded for the third time “to remain in Bhavamukha”. Though we call it an auditive experience, the reader should understand by it a realization in his heart of hearts. For, the Master did not hear it, unlike as he did twice before, from the mouth of any visible figure. But the Master’s mind had the immediate consciousness of the existence of that idea or will in the cosmic mind of the omnipresent Brahman, as it was remaining most of the time in complete oneness with the Absolute, the non-dual Being; and, at times, getting separated from It partially, was realizing that it was a part of the all-pervading Brahman with attributes, the Mother of the universe.[3] On account of that realization, the future purpose of his life stood completely revealed to him.

For, not standing in need of a body, nor at all desirous to continue in life, yet commanded again to “remain in Bhavamukha”, according to the inscrutable will of the universal Mother, the Master now came to know that he had to live in the body thenceforward in accordance with the will and purpose of the sportive Divine, and that he had been so commanded because his body could not continue to live, were he to remain eternally identified with Brahman. He also came to know his former lives, through Jatismaratwa (the power of remembering past lives) and that he was an Adhikarika person, or rather, an incarnation of God, eternally pure in nature, who now assumed a body and performed austerity etc., in order to rescue the modern age from the decline of religion and to bring about the

well-being of humanity. He came to know, moreover, that, it was with a view to accomplishing some special purpose of Hers that the universal Mother had brought him down on earth into a poor Brahmin family, as one devoid of all grandeur of external powers. He came to know, further, that only a few people would be able to know and understand, during his lifetime, the mystery of that play of the divine Mother and that as soon as the generality of people would begin to understand it, the Mother would absorb Her child into Her own Person; but that the spiritual waves, which his body and mind would generate, would go on surging with ever greater momentum and would bring after his passing away plenitude of well-being to humanity for all time.

3. What the scriptures say about the attainment of the power of remembering previous lives just before realizing Brahman

We must remember some of the statements in the scriptures, if we are to understand how the Master could have those extraordinary experiences. The aspirant, say the scriptures, attains Jatismaratwa[1] before he becomes fully established in the Pure Consciousness Itself with the help of the non-dual mood. In other words, with the fullest development of this remembrance, his memory reaches such a mature state that the entire history of his transmigration—how, where and how many times he had had to be encased in bodies and what actions, good or evil, he had performed—is revealed with a terrible vividness. Consequently, the transitoriness of everything in the world and the futility of the pursuit of worldly enjoyments, and of being born again and again under the same general conditions, are driven home to him. The intense detachment which then arises in his heart frees him from all desires whatsoever.

4. What the scriptures say about the attainment of Yogic powers, and the state in which all resolves come true

The Upanishad[1] says that the resolves of such persons always come true. And their minds through Samadhi can perceive any sphere they like, whether of gods or of for- bears or of any other beings. Patanjali, the great

sage, mentions in his *Yoga-sutras* that all kinds of Yogic powers are attained by such persons. Again, the author of the *Panchadasi,* synthesising this apparent contradiction co-existing in the same person viz., the attainment of Yogic powers and the absence of desires, says that although they attain such wonderful powers, they never apply them to further their own interests for the simple reason that they do not have any such desire. Absolutely dependent on the will of God, the Adhikarika persons alone amongst them apply at times those powers for the well-being of the many. That is why the author of the *Panchadasi* says that such a person has the power, but not the urge, to change the worldly circumstances in which he attains the knowledge of Brahman, and spends his time in that state.

5. The causes producing the Master's extraordinary realization become understandable when we study his life in the light of the above-mentioned sayings of the scriptures

If one studies the Master's life of this period in the light of the scriptural sayings quoted above, the how and why of most of the extraordinary realizations, if not all of them, stand fully revealed. One can understand how as a result of his whole-hearted offering of himself at the lotus feet of the divine Lord, he could attain perfect desirelessness and how in so short a time he ascended and firmly established himself in the Nirvikalpa plane of knowledge of Brahman. One can understand how he attained Jatismaratwa, as a result of which he had the immediate knowledge that the One, who had manifested Himself as Rama and Krishna in past ages and did good to humanity, had again assumed a body and manifested Himself in the present age as "Ramakrishna".[1] One can understand why he never applied the divine powers for the comforts of his own body and mind, though their manifestations for the good of humanity were matters of almost daily occurrence; why he could and did awaken in others the power of realizing spiritual truths by a mere glance or wish; and why his extraordinary influence is slowly and surely spreading into and acquiring mastery over all the countries of the world.

6. Why the experiences mentioned before were not had simultaneously

Thus did the Master know the past and future of his life at the time of his coming down to the realm of ideas from the non-dual state, though he was finally established in that state. But all those experiences do not seem to have come to him on one day or all of a sudden. He, we infer, had the perfect knowledge of all these things in a year after his coming down to the realm of ideas. During this time the Mother of the universe was removing, as it were, veil after veil from before his eyes, explaining clearly those things to him day after day. If we are asked why all those experiences were not revealed simultaneously to the Master's mind, we reply that, established in the non-dual state of consciousness and completely lost in the bliss of Brahman, he had no time or inclination to know them, till the modification of his mind took an outward direction. Thus was fulfilled the Master's earnest prayer to the Mother of the universe at the beginning of his Sadhana, "Mother, I do not know at all what I should do; I'll learn what Thou Thyself wilt teach me."

7. The realization of the Master that the attainment of the non-dual consciousness is the ultimate aim of all disciplines

Firmly established in the plane of the non-dual consciousness, the Master had the realization of another fact also. He came to feel in his heart of hearts that the realization of non-duality was the ultimate aim of all kinds of disciplines. For, having performed Sadhanas according to the teachings of all the main religious denominations prevalent in India, he had already been convinced that they all took the aspirants towards the non-dual plane. Asked about the non-dual state, he, therefore, said to us over and over again, "It is the finale, my child, the acme, which comes of itself in the life of all aspirants as the ultimate development of their love of God. Know it to be the last word of all faiths, and the faiths are only paths (and not the goal)."

8. The abovementioned realization of the Master was never fully grasped by anyone before

Having thus had the direct experience of non-duality, the Master's mind was filled with unbounded catholicity. He had now an extraordinary

sympathy for all the religious communities which taught that the aim of human life was the realization of God. But he did not realize at first that the said catholicity and sympathy were his discoveries[1] and that no aspirant, not even the foremost of them, in the past could attain them as fully as he. He (such is our impression) became gradually acquainted with that fact by coming in contact with the wise Sadhakas belonging to various religious communities at the Kali temple at Dakshineswar and at other well-known places of pilgrimage. But, thenceforward, he was very much wounded whenever he came across one-sidedness in religion, and he tried in all ways to remove that mean attitude.

9. The Master's practice of Islam, an example of the liberality of his mind established in the non-dual knowledge

We can clearly understand from an event of this time how liberal the Master's mind which was firmly poised in the non-dual knowledge, now became. The Master, we have seen, was ill for a few months after he had reached the zenith in the Practice of the non-dual mood. The event came to pass when he had come round. A short time previously one Govinda Ray had been in search of truth for some time. Hriday told us that he was a Kshatriya by birth. He was perhaps learned in Persian and Arabic. Having studied various religious doctrines and come in contact with different religious communities, he was at last attracted by the liberal doctrine of Islam and was formally initiated into it. Govinda, thirsting for truth, accepted the Islamic faith, but we cannot say how far he followed its social manners and customs. But, since he became initiated, he, we were told, engaged himself ardently in the reading of the Koran and in religious practices according to the process prescribed by that scripture. Govinda was an ardent lover of God. The method of worshipping God according to the teaching and mental attitude prevalent amongst the Sufis, followers of a sect of Islam, seems to have captivated his mind; for he now became engaged day and night in practising devotional moods like the Dervishes, the devotees belonging to that sect.

10. The arrival of the Sufi Govinda Ray

Somehow or other Govinda now came to the Kali temple at Dakshineswar and began to spend his time there with his "seat" spread under the peaceful shade of the Panchavati, which he thought, was a place favourable to religious practices. Muslim Fakirs, as well as Hindu Sadhus, who had renounced the world, were welcome at Rasmani's Kali temple and the hospitality of the temple was equally accorded to both of them. Therefore, while staying there Govinda had not to go round for alms. He spent his days joyfully meditating on his chosen Ideal.

11. The Master's resolve after talking with Govinda

The Master was attracted towards the devout Govinda, and happening to converse with him, was charmed with Govinda's sincere faith in and love for God. Thus was the Master's mind now attracted towards the Islamic religion. "This also", thought he, "is a path to the realization of God; the sportive Mother, the source of infinite Lila, has been blessing many people with the attainment of Her lotus feet through this path also. I must see how through it She makes those who take refuge in Her, attain their desired end. I'll be initiated by Govinda and engage myself in the practice of that spiritual mood."

12. Initiated by Govinda, the Master succeeded in the Sadhana

Thought was immediately followed by action. The Master expressed his desire to Govinda, became initiated and engaged himself in practising Islam according to its prescribed rules. The Master said, "I then devotionally repeated the holy syllable 'Allah', wore cloth like the Muslims, said Namaz thrice daily and felt disinclined even to see Hindu deities, not to speak of saluting them, inasmuch as the Hindu mode of thought vanished altogether from my mind. I spent three days in that mood, and had the full realization of the result of practices according to that faith." At the time of practising Islam, the Master at first had the vision of an effulgent, impressive personage with a long beard; afterwards he had the knowledge of the all-pervading Brahman with attributes and merged finally in the attributeless Brahman, the Absolute.

13. The behaviour of the Master at the time of practising Islam

At the time of practising Islam, the Master wanted, said Hriday, to take Muslim food. It was Mathur's solicitous request only that made him refrain from doing so. Knowing that the childlike Master would not abstain from it if that desire of his were not at least partially fulfilled, Mathur had a cook brought, under whose instruction a Brahmin cook prepared food in the Muslim manner, which was given to the Master to eat. The Master did not even once enter the inner courtyard of the Kali temple while practising Islam, but remained in the mansion of Mathur situated outside.

14. It appears from the practice of Islam by the Master that there will be brotherly union between the Hindu and the Muslim communities in India in future

From the event mentioned above, it becomes clear how sympathetic the Master's mind became towards other religious communities after he had attained perfection in the Vedantic discipline. It also becomes clear how, by having faith in the Vedantic knowledge alone, the Hindus and the Mohammedans of India may become sympathetic towards one another and develop a brotherly feeling. Otherwise, as the Master used to say "There is, as it were, a mountain of difference between them. Their thoughts and faiths, actions and behaviour have remained quite unintelligible to one another in spite of their living together for so long a time." Does the practice of Islam by the Master, the divine incarnation of the age, indicate that the said difference would some day disappear and both the Hindus and the Muslims would embrace one another in love?

15. How strong the memory of non-duality was in the Master's mind during the following years

As the result of his being established in the plane of Nirvikalpa consciousness, the memory of non-duality used to be suddenly awakened in him off and on even by the sight of things and persons within the bounds of the plane of duality, merging him in the Absolute. We saw that state brought on him by the slightest association of ideas even without his desiring it. It

is, therefore, superfluous to add that he could ascend any moment to that plane by a mere wish. It will be clear from the trifling events to be just mentioned, how deep and wide was his non-dual mood and how dear it was to him.

16. A few examples of it:

(i) the old grasscutter

The gardeners found it inconvenient to sow kitchen vegetables in the spacious temple garden at Dakshineswar when it became covered with growing grass in the rainy season. Therefore, grass-cutters were allowed to cut and take away grass from there. One day, having got the permission to take away grass without paying any price for it, an old grass-cutter cut grass joyfully, bundled it and was about to go to sell in the market. The Master saw that the old man had cut so much grass out of avarice that it was beyond his power to carry or even lift up that load of grass. But the indigent grass-cutter refused to acknowledge it and in spite of his repeated efforts in various ways to lift that big bundle upon his head, he failed miserably. While looking on it, the Master was inspired with spiritual emotion and thought, “Ah, the Self, the knowledge infinite, abides within and so much foolishness and ignorance without!” “O Rama, inscrutable is Thy play,” said he and entered into ecstasy.

(ii) an injured butterfly

One day at Dakshineswar the Master saw a butterfly flying with a tiny stick stuck into its tail. He was at first pained to think that some naughty urchin had done it, but the next moment he was inspired and burst into laughter saying, “O Rama, Thou hast brought Thyself to this plight!”

(iii) the new Durva grass trampled

At one time a particular spot of the garden of the Kali temple was covered with newly grown Durva grass and was beautiful to look at. While

he was looking at it, the Master transcended the normal consciousness and was feeling identified with that spot when a man just happened to walk across that field at which he became very restless, feeling unbearable pain in his chest. Mentioning that event, he said to us later, “I then felt just that kind of pain which is felt when anybody tramples on one’s chest. That state of Bhavasamadhi is very painful.- Although I had it for six hours only, it became quite unbearable.”

(iv) the Master’s body was injured by the blow dealt at a boatman’s body

One day the Master while in Bhavasamadhi was looking on the Ganga, standing at the spacious Ghat with the open portico. Two boats were at anchor at the Ghat and the boatmen were quarrelling over some matter. The quarrel became gradually bitter and the stronger man gave a severe slap on the back of the weaker. At that, the Master cried out suddenly with pain. Hriday heard it from the Kali temple, went there quickly and saw that the Master’s back had become red and swollen. Impatient with anger, Hriday said repeatedly, “Uncle, show me the man who has beaten you; I’ll tear off his head.” When afterwards the Master quietened down a little, Hriday was astonished to hear of the event and thought, “Is it ever possible?” Girish Chandra Ghosh heard the event from the Master’s lips and narrated it to us. Innumerable events of this nature regarding the Master may be mentioned but we refrain from doing so to avoid superfluity.

Footnote

1. III.2.

1. *Mandukya Upanishad, 2.*

2. II.8.

3. III.3.

1. Previous lives are remembered on attaining the knowledge of the Samskara, the past impressions. The *Patanjali Aphorisms*. 4. 18.

1. *Chhandogya Upanishad.* 8. 2.

1. Vide II. 21, for details.—Tr.

1. IV.4.

CHAPTER XVII
THE MASTER'S VISIT TO HIS NATIVE VILLAGE

1. The Master went to Kamarpukur with Hriday and the Bhairavi Brahmani

The Master suffered for six months and then his body was rid of the disease, and his mind became to a great extent habituated to dwell in Bhavamukha, the plane of consciousness consisting of both duality and non-duality. But his body was not as strong and healthy as before and it was feared that his dysentery might recur for want of pure drinking water when the waters of the Ganga become saline during the rainy season. It was therefore settled that he should go to Kamarpukur, his birthplace, for a few months. This was in 1867. Arrangements were made. The devout Jagadamba Dasi, wife of Mathur Babu, knew that the Master's household was ever poor like that of Siva. So she made arrangements with much care about all the necessary articles so that "father" might not have inconvenience of any kind.[1] The Master then started at an auspicious moment. Hriday and the Bhairavi Brahmani accompanied him. But his aged mother stuck to her previous resolve of living on the Ganga and stayed at Dakshineswar under Mathur's care.

2. How the Master's friends and relatives found him

3. The Holy Mother came to Kamarpukur

The Master had not come to Kamarpukur for the past eight years. Therefore, his relatives, it is superfluous to add, were eager to see him. And

it needs no mention that there were special reasons for it, for many strange rumours had reached their ears from time to time viz., that he was crying "Hari, Hari" in a woman's dress, that he had become a monk, that he was repeating "Allah, Allah" continually, so on and so forth. But, as soon as the Master was in their midst, they all found how baseless were the rumours; for, they found that he was just his old self. The same amiability, the same loving merriment, the same austere truthfulness, the same profound religious care and the same surging of overwhelming emotion at the name of Hari—all these old qualities of his were seen in him in the fullest measure as before. The only change they found in him was that his body and mind were glowing with such an indescribable, heavenly effulgence that they felt a great hesitation to appear before him suddenly or to broach worldly topics when he did not start them himself. Again, they all felt that their worldly anxieties disappeared into thin air, so to say, when they were near him and that there flowed in their hearts a serene and tranquil current of bliss and peace. But when they were away from him, they experienced a strong inexpressible desire to go to him once more. Thus, there was an incessant flow of bliss in that poor family when they had him in their midst after so long a time. And in order to fill the cup of happiness to the brim, a messenger was sent under the instruction of the ladies, to Jayaramvati, the village of the Master's father-in-law, to bring his wife. The Master knew it, but did not express either approval or disapproval. It had fallen to the lot of his newly married wife to have seen her husband once only after their marriage. It was when, according to the custom of the family, the Master was taken to Jayaramvati on one occasion when she was seven years of age. But she was then too young to understand what marriage meant. Therefore, the only thing regarding the event that was retained in her memory was that, when the Master came to her father's house with Hriday, the latter brought a good many lotus flowers from somewhere, sought her out from a secluded part of the house where she had hidden herself and, while out of bashfulness she shrank into herself, worshipped her feet. Six years after this event, she was taken to Kamarpukur in her thirteenth year. This time she spent a month there. But she had not the good fortune to see either the Master or her mother-in-law as both of them were then away at Dakshineswar. She came again six months later to her father-in-law's house but could not see either of them, for the same reason, during her stay of a month and a half.

Three or four months had already elapsed since her return to her father's house when news came that the Master had come and she was to go to Kamarpukur. She had reached her fourteenth year, six or seven months before. Therefore, this was practically the first occasion when she met her husband after her marriage.

4. The Master's behaviour with his relatives and boyhood friends at that time

It seems that the Master stayed at Kamarpukur for six or seven months on this occasion. The friends of his early days and all the men and women of the village known to him mixed with him as before and tried to make him happy. The Master also was very pleased to see them after such a long time. In mingling with men and women of Kamarpukur, in their circumscribed worldly lives, the Master felt at that time a joy similar to that felt by great thinkers and scholars when, during their leisure after hard toils; they join with children in their aimless and meaningless amusements. But it may be said without contradiction that he was always anxious that they should become conscious of the transitoriness of this life and, although living in the world, they should gradually attain self-control and learn to depend on God in all matters. We may infer this from the manner in which he always taught us the very same things through play and fun, mirth and merriment.

On finding that, even living in the little world of the little village, some had made unexpected progress in religious life, he was struck with wonder at the inconceivable glory of God. He told us many times of an event to illustrate this.

5. What the Master said about the spiritual progress of some of them

The Master said that one day during that period, he was resting in his room after his midday meal. Some ladies, his neighbours, came to see him, sat near him and became engaged in spiritual conversation with him. The Master suddenly happened to be in ecstasy and felt that he was a fish joyfully swimming and sporting, sometimes coming to the surface, and sometimes sinking deep—all in the ocean of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss.

The Master happened to be in ecstasy very often while talking with others. Therefore, not at all mindful of it, the ladies expressed their own opinions, which created a sort of noise. One of the company forbade the others to do so and asked them to be quiet till his ecstasy came to an end. She said, “He has now become a fish and is swimming in the sea of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. If you make a noise, that Bliss of his will be interrupted.” Although many of them did not then believe in her words, all remained quiet. When he came down from that state and was asked about his experience, the Master said, “Yes, what she said is true. How strange! How could she know it?”

6. The reason why the people of Kamarpukur appeared wonderfully new to the Master

It seems to us that the daily rounds of the men and women of the village of Kamarpukur now appeared new to the Master to a great extent. He now felt like a man who had returned home from a far off place and to whom every person and object of his village appeared to be new. For, although the Master had been away from the place of his birth for a short period of eight years only, a violent storm of spiritual strivings had raged in his heart during that period and produced a radical change in it; for, those eight years he had forgotten himself, forgotten the world and ascended far beyond the bounds of time and space. But while descending from there, he came tranfigured with the knowledge that Brahman existed in all beings, and found all persons and things mellowed by an extraordinary new light. It is well known in philosophy that our consciousness of time and the measurement of its duration arise from the succession of our mental functions. Therefore, a short period during which a great many thoughts rise and sink in our minds appears to us to be very long. One is astonished to think what tumultuous waves of thoughts and emotions surged in the Master’s mind during this period. Is it, therefore, surprising that the said period should appear to him to be an age?

7. The Master’s eternal relation of love with the people of his birth-place

One is astonished to think of the wonderful relation of affection in which the Master bound up all the people, men and women, of Kamarpukur. The men and women of all families including those of the Lahas, the Brahmins, the blacksmiths, the carpenters, the gold-merchants and so on, were all bound to him in a relation of reverential love. We were charmed to hear the Master, on many occasions, speak with great pleasure about the devotion and affection for him, of a large number of men and women, e.g., the simple-hearted and devout Prasanna, the widowed sister of Dharmadas Laha, the Master's friend Gayavishnu Laha, the son of Dharmadas, Srinivas Sankhari of sincere faith, the devout ladies of the Pyne family, the Master's Bhikshamata Dhani, the blacksmith woman, and others. All of them remained at this time almost always beside the Master. Those who could not do so on account of household duties or other business used to come in the morning, or midday, or evening, whenever they had leisure. When they came, the ladies brought with them various sweet and delicious dishes and felt delighted in feeding the Master. We have given the reader elsewhere[1] an indication of how the Master, although living in the family at home, and surrounded by the people of the village who behaved so sweetly, always remained divinely inspired. It is, therefore, needless to repeat it here.

8. The Master began to do his duty to his wife

The Master paid attention to the performance of another great duty when he came this time to Kamarpukur. At first, the Master had been indifferent to his wife's coming to Kamarpukur, but now he was intent on giving her education and training for her well-being. Knowing that the Master was married, Tota Puri, his teacher, who initiated him in Sannyasa, had said to him at one time, "What does it matter? He only may be regarded as really established in Brahman whose renunciation, detachment, discrimination and knowledge remain intact in all respects in spite of his wife being with him. He alone may be regarded as having really attained the knowledge of Brahman, who can always look equally upon both man and woman as the Self and can behave accordingly. Others who have the knowledge of difference between man and woman, may be Sadhakas, but are still far away from the knowledge of Brahman." The above remark of Tota Puri

came to the Master's mind and induced him to test his knowledge attained by spiritual practices extending over a long period, as well as to look to his wife's well-being.

9. The success the Master attained in it

The Master could never neglect or leave half-finished anything he considered to be a duty. The same held good here also. He did not stop at partially educating his girl-wife who depended entirely on him regarding everything of this world and of the other. He was, from now on, especially mindful that she should learn household duties, know people's character, put money to good use, and above all, surrender her all to God and be an expert in behaving correctly according to place and time and circumstance.[1] We have, in many other places, hinted how far-reaching was the result of that teaching which the Master imparted to her, placing before her his ideal life of unbroken continence. Therefore, suffice it to say here that the Holy Mother (as she is called by the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna) was happy, and continued in all respects to have the Master's pure love, devoid of the slightest tinge of lust, and could offer her life-long worship to him as her chosen Ideal, and follow his footsteps and mould her life accordingly.

10. The Brahmani's apprehension and the change in her attitude on seeing the Master behave thus with his wife

The Bhairavi Brahmani did not, on many occasions, understand the Master when he went forward to do his duty to his wife. We have seen that she tried to make the Master give up his resolve of being initiated into Sannyasa when he came in contact with Tota Puri.[1] For, love of God, she thought, would be completely uprooted from the Master's mind if he was so initiated. Some such apprehension took possession of her heart even now. She, it seems, thought that it would be prejudicial to the Master's continence if he mixed so intimately with his wife. But the Master could not now, any more than on the earlier occasion, comply with the Brahmani's instruction, which greatly wounded her feelings. This gave rise to egoism, which was aggravated into pride and vanity, which now made her often lose

faith in the Master. We were told by Hriday that she openly expressed her feelings from time to time. For example, if any one raised a question before her on any spiritual matter and said that he would ask Sri Ramakrishna and have his opinion on it, she would flare up and say, “What can he say? It is I who have opened his eyes.” Or, she would scold the womenfolk of the family for trivial reasons and, at times, for no reason at all. But the Master remained calm in spite of such words and oppressive behaviour of hers and did not cease having devotion or paying reverence to her now as before. Instructed by the Master the Holy Mother paid the Brahmani the respect due to her own mother-in-law and always engaged herself in her service with love and devotion; and knowing herself to be an ignorant girl, she did not protest against any of her words or actions.

11. The Brahmani’s power of discrimination was ruined owing to the increase of pride and egoism

When pride and egoism increase, the intelligence of even a clever man gets clouded. It does not, then, take long for that pride to get knocks and bumps at every step. When, however, it is knocked about in that way, a man with some sense left in him, knows its evil effects, gives it up and follows the rising curve of his life again. Such was the case with the learned Brahmani now; for unable to behave rightly with reference to persons and circumstances, under the influence of that pride, one day she created an awkward situation. The incident came about thus:

12. The event illustrating this

We have already mentioned Srinivas Sankhari. Although not born in a high family, Srinivas was higher than many Brahmins in respect of devotion to God. One day during this period, he came to the Master for the purpose of having Raghuvir’s Prasada. It needs no mention that the Master and all the members of his family became very happy with Srinivas in their midst. The devout Brahmani also was pleased to see Srinivas’s faith and devotion. They talked on various devotional topics till midday, when the offering of food to Raghuvir and other services were finished and Srinivas sat down to

take food. When he finished and was ready, according to the prevalent custom, to clean the place where he had taken his food, the Brahmani forbade him to do so and said, “We’ll do it ourselves.” At the Brahmani’s importunities Srinivas had no alternative but to leave the matter there and go home.

13. Hriday quarrelled with the Brahmani

In villages dominated by strict observance of social rules and regulations, great quarrels and party feelings are often roused on account of the breaking of those rules. And such an event was going to happen now also. For, the Brahmin women who came to visit the Master raised great objection to the cleaning of the leavings of Srinivas by the Bhairavi who was a Brahmin woman. The Bhairavi did not admit the propriety of their objection. The quarrel gradually increased. Hriday, the Master’s nephew, heard of it. Knowing that a great quarrel might arise over that trifling event, Hriday asked the Brahmani not to violate custom, but she paid no heed to his words. Hriday got incensed and there grew up a noisy quarrel between him and the Brahmani. Hriday said, “If you do so, we won’t allow you to remain inside the house.” The Brahmani also was not the sort of person to let the matter drop and she said, “What harm if you don’t? Manasa[1] will go to bed in Sitala’s room.”[2] All other members of the house mediated and entreating the Brahmani to refrain from the cleaning, brought the quarrel to an end.

14. The Brahmani recognized her mistake; and apprehensive of having given offence, she repented, asked pardon and left for Kasi

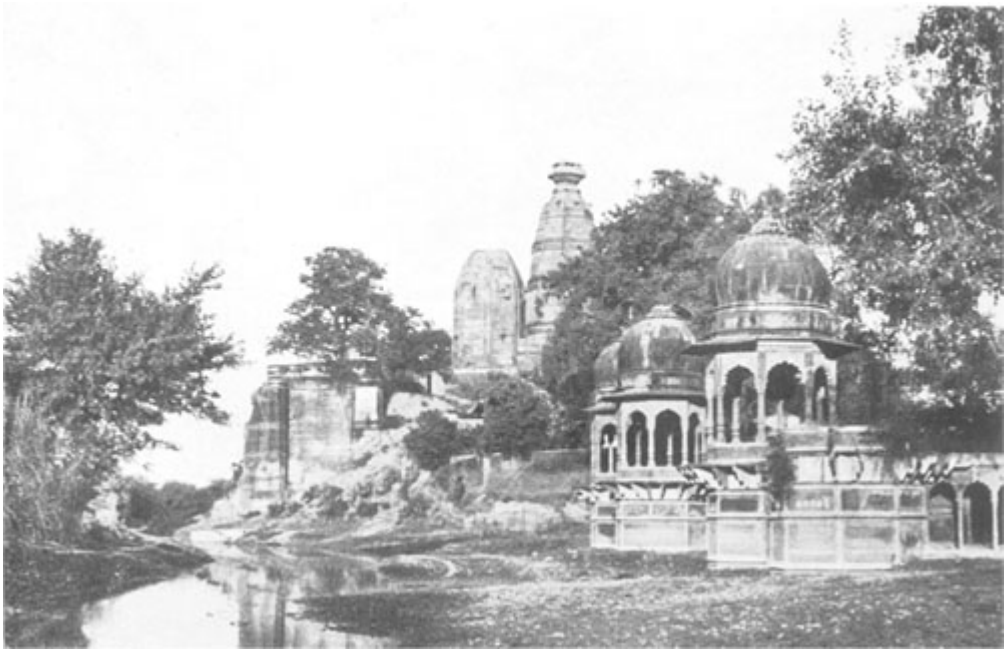
Although she refrained, the Brahmani’s pride was severely wounded that day. When her anger subsided, she thought calmly over the matter and understood her own mistake. She thought that when she was committing such blunders again and again, she should no longer continue to stay there. When the eyes of an aspirant possessed of keen insight fall somehow or other on his own heart, no impure ideas can conceal themselves from him. That was the case with the Brahmani now. She studied the change of her attitude towards the Master and found herself at fault there too and became

very repentant. A few days passed, when one day she made garlands of various flowers with her own hands and smeared them with sandal-paste and having beautifully adorned the Master as Sri Gauranga, asked his forgiveness with all her heart. Afterwards, controlling herself carefully and offering her heart and soul to God, she left Kamarpukur and took the path to Kasi, the abode of the Lord of the universe. Thus did the Brahmani take final leave of the Master after having spent six long years with him at a stretch.

15. The Master returned to Dakshineswar

The Master spent about seven months in various spiritual moods at Kamarpukur, and returned to Dakshineswar (probably at the end of 1867) when he had regained his health and was almost as strong and healthy as before. An important event happened in his life shortly after his return. We will present it to the reader now.

Manikarnika Ghat, Kasi



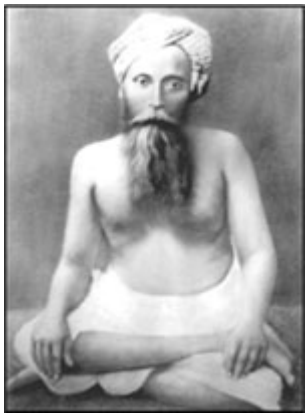
Vrindavan

Kesav Chandra Sen

Vijay Krishna Goswami

Shivanath Sastri

Mahendra Nath Gupta

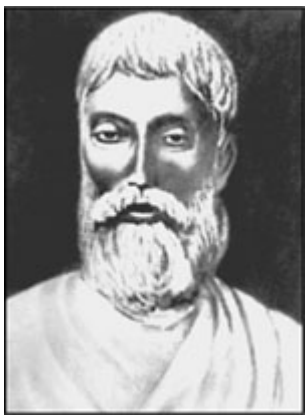


Balaram Basu

Surendranath Mitra

Ramachandra Datta

Girish Chandra Ghosh



Nag Mahashay

Gopala's Mother

Golap-ma

Yogin-ma

Swami Vivekananda

Direct Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna

Footnote

1. IV. 1.

1. IV. 1.

1. III. 2 & 4.

1. III. 2.

1. Manasa—goddess of snakes. The Brahmani thus compared herself to the angry snakes.

2. The temple in which Sitala, a goddess, was installed.

CHAPTER XVIII
THE MASTER'S PILGRIMAGE AND THE STORY OF HRIDAYRAM

1. The Master's pilgrimage settled

Mathuranath and his wife were now getting ready to visit the principal holy places of northwestern India. A day for the starting on the journey was fixed in the month of January and it was settled that many persons, Mathur's Guru's son and others, should go with him. Mathur and his wife made importunate requests to the Master to go with them. Consequently, he agreed to accompany them with his aged mother[1] and his nephew, Hriday.

2. The day of starting

Mathur started with the Master and others on an auspicious day — January 27, 1868. We have told the reader many things about the Master's pilgrimage elsewhere.[2] We shall, therefore, briefly mention here what we heard about it from Hriday.

3. The arrangement about the pilgrimage

About one hundred and twenty-five persons in all—Sri Ramakrishna, his mother, Mathur, his wife, his daughter-in-law, his Guru's son, Hriday, a Brahmin cook, a gatekeeper and men servants and women servants,— started to visit the places of pilgrimage on that occasion. One second class and three third class carriages were reserved for them by the Railway Company and it was arranged that, whenever Mathur liked, they should detach those four bogies at any place between Calcutta and Kasi.

4. Visit to Sri Vaidyanath and service to the poor

Mathur and others visited Sri Vaidyanath at Deoghar on the way and rested a few days there, where an important event occurred. The Master's heart became filled with compassion on seeing the miserable plight of men and women of a poor village there. He requested Mathur to feed them one day and to give a piece of cloth to each of them [1], which he did.

5. A mishap on the way

From Deoghar Mathur went direct to Kasi. Nothing of importance happened on the way, except that when Sri Ramakrishna and Hriday got down at a certain station near Kasi, the train started before they could get into it. Mathur became anxious and wired from Kasi that they should be sent by the next train. But they did not have to wait for the next train. Rajendralal Bandyopadhyaya, an important officer of the Railway Company, arrived there on supervision duty in a special train shortly afterwards and seeing them in that plight, took them with him up to Kasi. Rajendralal Bandyopadhyaya was a resident of the Baghbazar quarter of Calcutta.

When he reached Kasi, Mathur Babu hired two houses side by side on the Kedarghat. He behaved there like a prince in all respects.[2] Whenever he went out, a silver umbrella was held over his head and servants would carry silver maces and other paraphernalia before and after him.

6. They stayed at Kedarghat and paid their obeisance to Sri Viswanath

While he was staying there, Sri Ramakrishna went in a palanquin to pay his obeisance to Viswanath, the principal deity of Kasi, almost everyday. Hriday accompanied him on foot. Even on the way to the temple, the Master used to pass into ecstasy, not to speak of the time when he saw the deity. Though he entered into ecstasy in all the temples, he especially experienced it in the temple of Kedarnath.

7. The Master and Trailanga Swami

Besides visiting the temples, the Master went to see the eminent holy men of Kasi. Hriday always accompanied him. The Master paid a few visits to the famous Trailanga Swami, one of the foremost of Paramahamsas. The Swami was then observing the vow of silence and was staying at the Manikarnika Ghat. On their first meeting, the Swami placed his snuffbox before the Master for his use by way of giving a cordial reception to him. Examining his sense organs and the limbs of his body the Master told Hriday that he bore the signs of a true Paramahamsa and that he was, so to say, the living image of Siva. The Swami had resolved to have a Ghat built near Manikarnika. At the request of the Master, Hriday helped that work forward by placing a few spadefuls of earth there. One day, afterwards, the Master invited the Swami and brought him to Mathur's residence and treated him to rice-porridge with his own hand.

8. The Master's behaviour at Prayag

The Master stayed at Kasi for five or six days and then went to Prayag with Mathur. He bathed in the holy confluence and stayed there for three nights. Mathur and all others shaved their heads there according to scriptural injunction, but the Master did not do so, saying, "It is not necessary for me to do it." From Prayag they returned to Kasi, where they stayed for a fortnight before proceeding to Vrindavan.

9. The Master visited places like Nidhuvan in Vrindavan

Mathur stayed in a house near Nidhuvan at Vrindavan. He displayed his pomp and power there also, as in Kasi. He would go with his wife to visit temples where he offered a few gold coins as a token of respect while saluting the deities. Besides visiting Nidhuvan, the Master paid visits to Radhakunda, Shyamkunda and the Govardhan hill, ascending to the peak of that hillock in an ecstatic mood. He heard of the eminent holy men of the place and paid visits to them. He was highly pleased to meet Gangamata at Nidhuvan. He indicated to Hriday the signs on her person and said that she had attained a very high state of spirituality.

10. The Master returned to Kasi and stayed there

Having stayed at Vrindavan for about a fortnight, Mathur and others returned to Kasi. In order to see Viswanath, the universal Lord, adorned in a special dress and ornaments, they stayed there till the middle of 1868. The Master saw the golden image of Annapurna during this period.

11. He met the Brahmani at Kasi. The last information about her

The Master, Hriday said, met the Bhairavi Brahmani named Yogeswari at Kasi. He went several times to her house in the quarter called the "Sixty-four Yoginis." The Brahmani was living there with a lady named Mokshada. The Master was pleased to see the faith and devotion of that lady. The Brahmani accompanied the Master to Vrindavan, where he asked her to live permanently. She passed away there shortly after the Master returned from Vrindavan.

12. The Master went to see Mahesh, the Vina-player

During their stay at Vrindavan, the Master had a desire to listen to the playing of the stringed instrument, the Vina. But his desire was not fulfilled, as no Vina-player was available there at that time. That desire again arose in his mind when he returned to Kasi. Accompanied by Hriday, he went to the house of the expert Vina-player, Maheshchandra Sarkar, whom he requested to play on the Vina for him. Mahesh lived in the quarter called Madanpura in Kasi. At the request of the Master, he played that day for a long time on that instrument with great delight. As soon as he heard the sweet ringing sound of the Vina, the Master was in ecstasy. When he regained partial normal consciousness, he was heard to pray to the divine Mother, saying, "Mother, give me normal consciousness; I want to listen attentively to the Vina." Immediately afterwards, he was able to stay in the external plane of consciousness, when he listened to the music with delight and now and then sang to the accompaniment of the Vina. From 5 p.m. to 8 p.m he spent his time delightfully there, when he was requested by Mahesh to take a little refreshment, which he did, and returned to Mathur. Mahesh used to come

daily to see the Master thereafter. The Master said, “He completely lost himself in playing on the Vina.”

13. He returned to Dakshineswer. His behaviour at that time

Mathur expressed his desire to go to Gaya, the abode of Vishnu. But, as the Master had a strong objection, he gave up the idea and came back to Calcutta. After this pilgrimage to the principal places for about four months, the Master, said Hriday, returned to Dakshineswar in the middle of 1868. The Master brought from Vrindavan some earth and dust of Radhakunda and Shyamakunda. When he came to Dakshineswar he scattered, with the help of Hriday, a little of the earth and dust round the Panchavati and dug in the remainder with his own hands in his Sadhana-cottage, saying, “This spot becomes from today a holy place like Vrindavan.” He requested Mathur, shortly afterwards, to invite Vaishnava teachers and devotees from various places. They came and the Master celebrated a festival at the Panchavati. Mathur paid sixteen rupees to each Vaishnava teacher and one rupee to each devotee at the time of farewell, thus showing his respect for them.

14. The death of Hriday’s wife and his dispassion

Hriday’s wife died a short time after he had returned from the pilgrimage. On account of that event his mind was filled with dispassion for some time. Hriday, we said before, was not a man of a contemplative temperament. His ideal of life was to improve his worldly condition and spend his life enjoying the pleasures of the world as far as possible. Though other moods came on him from time to time because of keeping the constant company of the Master, they could not last long. Whenever there came an opportunity to satisfy his desire for enjoyment, he forgot everything else, pursued the thing longed for, and until it was achieved, no other thought could enter his mind. Therefore, though all the Master’s Sadhanas were performed during Hriday’s stay at Dakshineswar, the latter had little opportunity to see and understand them. However, Hriday truly loved his uncle and did not fail to render whatever service was necessary for him at any time, and as a result

of it he developed great courage, adroitness and intelligence. The more the holy men came and spoke of the super-human nature of his uncle and the more he observed the manifestation of divine powers in him as the result of his spiritual practices, the greater was his feeling of strength within himself —thanks to his nearness to his dear uncle. He thought that as his uncle was so much his own and as he had become a favourite of his by his services to him, all the achievements in the spiritual world were already his too in a way. Should he ever make an effort to have them, his uncle, by his divine powers, would enable him to attain them. He, therefore, did not feel that he was under any obligation to think of the next world. He would at first enjoy this world a little and apply his mind to the other afterwards. Grief-stricken at the death of his wife, Hriday now thought that the proper time for the latter had arrived. He applied his mind more steadfastly than before to the worship of the Mother of the universe, and used to put off his cloth and the sacred thread during the time of meditation and importunately requested the Master to help him to have spiritual experiences similar to his own. The Master assured him strongly that he had no need to do those things; for all the results would be his by just serving the Master. He told him that if both of them were filled with divine inspiration day and night and forgot everything concerning the body such as eating, sleeping, etc., neither of them could look after the other. But Hriday did not give ear to those words. The Master at last had to yield, and said, “Let Mother’s will be done. Does anything happen by my will? It was Mother who turned my mind away from the world and brought about those conditions in me and made me have strange experiences; if Mother wills so you will also have them.”

15. Hriday in Bhavasamadhi

A few days after this talk, Hriday began to have, while worshipping, a few wonderful visions and states of divine ecstasy with partial consciousness. One day Mathur Babu saw Hriday in that state and said to the Master, “What is this state Hriday is in, father?” The Master explained it to him, saying, “It is no sham with him. He importuned Mother for a little vision; that is why he is having it. Mother will bring him back to his normal condition after giving him a taste of it.” “Father,” said Mathur, “it is all your

play; only you have brought about this state on Hriday. So, please calm him again. Both of us should be with you like Nandi and Bhringi and serve you. Why should these abnormalities be with us?"

16. Hriday's wonderful vision

Shortly after this conversation between the Master and Mathur, one night Hriday saw the Master going towards the Panchavati. Thinking that he might require his water-pot and towel, he took them and followed him. As he was going, Hriday had an extraordinary vision. He saw that the Master was not a human being, that he was not composed of flesh and blood, that the Panchavati was illumined by the light coming out of his body and that while the Master was walking, neither of his feet, which were also of light, did touch the ground but carried him through the air. Taking all this to be an optical illusion, Hriday rubbed his eyes again and again, observed all the surrounding things in their natural state and looked at the Master once more. But to no purpose. Although he saw all other things—trees, creepers, the Ganga, the hut etc., to be what they were, he repeatedly saw the Master in that luminous form. Extremely amazed at it, Hriday asked himself whether there was any change in his mind which made him have that experience. Thinking thus, he looked at his own body and saw that he too was an effulgent being, made of light, an attendant and companion of God Himself serving Him eternally, a part, so to say, of His person which was light embodied, and now having a separate existence for the sole purpose of serving Him. When he had this experience and came to know the mystery of his own life, his heart was flooded with a strong current of bliss. He forgot himself, forgot the world and forgot to consider whether the people of the world would speak well or ill of him. He was now in ecstasy with only partial normal consciousness and cried aloud repeatedly like one mad, "O Ramakrishna, O Ramakrishna, we are not mortal beings. Why are we here? Come, let us go from country to country and set souls free from bondage! I am also what you are."

The Master said to us, "Hearing him crying out thus, I said, 'Ah, stop, stop. What's the matter with us that you are doing all this? People will run up here thinking some evil has befallen us.' But did he give ear to it at all? I

then came hurriedly to him, touched his heart and said, ‘Make the fellow dull and drab again, O Mother.’ ”

17. Hriday’s mind became dull

Hriday said to us that no sooner had the Master said so than his bliss and vision vanished into the void and he was his former dull self once again. Thus, fallen suddenly from that state of ecstasy, his mind was filled with dejection. “Uncle,” sobbed out he, “why did you do this? Why did you say that I should become dull? I shall never again have such a blissful vision.” “Have I said,” replied the Master, “that you should for ever be dull? I said, ‘Be calm now.’ What a noise you made with such a small vision! That was why I had to say so. What a wealth of visions and experiences I have all the twenty-four hours! But do I make any noise? It is not yet time for you to have such visions. Now be at rest; when it is time, you will have various visions and experiences.”

18. Obstacle to Hriday’s Sadhana

Although Hriday had to remain silent at the words of the Master, he felt much wounded. Under the influence of egoism, he thought afterwards that he would try to have that vision again somehow. Reflecting thus, he increased the period of his Japa and meditation and resolved that he should go at night to Panchavati and sitting under the tree, where the Master formerly used to sit for Japa and meditation, call on the Mother of the Universe. Thinking so, once, at dead of night, he left his bed, went to the Panchavati, and sat down on the-Master’s seat to meditate. The Master too felt a desire to come to the Panchavati and started for it. Scarcely had he reached the place when he heard Hriday piteously calling out to him, “Save, uncle, save me! I am about to be burnt to death.” The Master stepped forward quickly, came up to him and asked him, “What is the matter, Hriday?” Restless on account of pain, Hriday said, “Uncle, no sooner had I sat down here for meditation than some one threw, as it were, a plateful of live charcoal over my body. I am suffering from an unbearable burning pain.” The Master passed his hand over his body and said, “Don’t be afraid;

it's cool. Why do you do all this? Have I not told you again and again that you will achieve everything by serving me?" Hriday used to say that all his pain was immediately removed by the touch of the Master's hand. He never afterwards went again to the Panchavati to practise meditation, and a conviction grew in his mind that it would not be good for him to act contrary to his uncle's advice.

19. Hriday celebrated the autumn worship of Durga

Hriday, no doubt, got some sort of peace from the words of the Master, but the daily duties of the temple now appeared distasteful to him. His mind was in search of some novel action from which he could derive some pleasure. Seeing the advent of the autumn season of 1868, he resolved to perform the autumn worship of the Mother in his house. Ganganarayan, his elder half-brother had then passed away and Raghav, appointed to collect rent in the estate of Mathur Babu, was earning a decent income. With the change of time, when prosperity dawned, a new worship hall was built. Ganganarayan had expressed a wish that he should once bring the divine Mother and worship Her there. But he did not get an opportunity of fulfilling that wish. Hriday remembered that desire of his and tried to fulfil it. Knowing that Hriday, a man of action, might possibly get peace by celebrating the worship, the Master agreed to it, while Mathur rendered pecuniary help to him. He helped him, no doubt, but expressed great eagerness to have the Master at his own residence during the worship. Wounded at heart on that account, Hriday made ready to go home alone to perform the worship. Seeing him thus wounded, the Master, Hriday told us, consoled him, saying, "Why are you pained? In my subtle body I shall daily go to see your worship; nobody except you will see me! Have as the Tantradharaka a Brahmin to dictate the Mantras to you and perform the worship yourself according to your own devotion. Instead of keeping a complete fast, at midday drink milk, Ganga water, and the syrup of candy. If you perform the worship in this way, the Mother of the universe will certainly accept your worship." Hriday said that the Master gave him detailed instructions as to who should be ordered to make the image, who

should be appointed Tantradharaka, and how all other things should be done. He then started home with great delight to perform the worship.

20. Hriday had a vision of the Master at the time of the worship of Durga

Hriday reached home and did everything according to the advice of the Master. He performed the rites pertaining to the sixth day of the bright fortnight such as the awakening of the Goddess, the preliminary consecration of the image, the invocation of the Devi, etc., and engaged himself in the worship. After completing the worship enjoined for the seventh day, Hriday saw the Master in a luminous body standing in ecstasy, beside the image during the adoration of the Devi with the waving of lights. Hriday said that he was filled with great zeal and ardour on having the divine vision of the Master near the image at that time every day and also during the Sandhi Puja, the "juncture" worship. Hriday came back to Dakshineswar shortly after the worship was finished and narrated to the Master everything concerning the worship. "At the time of the Arati and the 'juncture' worship", said the Master to him, "I felt indeed a great yearning to see your worship and I went into ecstasy, and felt that I went along a path of light and was present in your worship hall in a luminous body."

21. The last occasion of Hriday's worship of Durga

Hriday told us that once the Master, while in ecstasy, said to him, "You will perform the yearly worship thrice." And it actually happened so. Disregarding the Master's words, he was making preparations for the worship for the fourth time, when such a series of obstacles occurred that he had, at last, to give it up. Hriday married again shortly after the worship of the first year and applied his mind to the service of the Master and to the worship at the Dakshineswar temple as before.

Footnote

1. Some say that the Master’s mother did not go on pilgrimage with him. But Hriday told us she did.

2. IV. 3.

1. III. 7.

2. IV. 3.

CHAPTER XIX
THE DEATH OF THE MASTER'S RELATIONS

1. The story of Akshay, son of Ramkumar

We have already acquainted the reader a little with Akshay, the son of the Master's eldest brother Ramkumar. Akshay came to Dakshineswar and was appointed priest in the Vishnu temple in 1865, a short time after the revered Tota Puri came there. Akshay was then about seventeen years old. It is necessary to say a few words here about him. As his mother had died at the time of his birth, he became an object of special love to all his relatives. He was only three or four years old when the Master came for the first time to Calcutta in 1852. The Master, therefore, had had the occasion to take Akshay on his lap and bring him up with loving care for two or three years before he came to Calcutta. But his father Ramkumar never in his life took him on his lap. When asked the reason for it, he would say, "It will be love lost; the child will not live long." While afterwards the Master forgot himself, forgot the world and engaged himself in spiritual practices, the beautiful child had been passing through the tender years, and he was now about to enter youth. Naturally he looked more beautiful than ever.

2. The beauty of Akshay

We were told by the Master and his relatives that Akshay was indeed a beautiful person. They said that his complexion was as bright as his features were graceful and handsome. He looked like a living form of Siva.

3. Akshay's devotion to Sri Ramachandra and his love of Sadhana

Akshay's mind was very much devoted from his childhood to Sri Ramachandra. He spent a long time daily in the service of Raghuvir, his family deity. Therefore, when he took charge of the worship at the Dakshineswar temple, he was appointed to do a duty which was quite to his liking. The Master said, "While he was performing the worship of Radha-Govinda, he became so much absorbed in meditation that he had no idea of the crowds of people coming and going out of the temple and would not regain his normal consciousness before the lapse of a couple of hours." Having finished the daily worship at the temple, he would go, we have been told by Hriday, to the Panchavati and spend a long time in worshipping Siva there. He would then cook his food with his own hands and, after taking his meal, apply his mind to the study of the *Bhagavata.* Besides, by a new urge of the love of God, he practised so much of Nyasa and Pranayama that his throat and palate bled and swelled now and again. Is it any wonder, therefore, that such love and devotion on his part to God endeared him to the Master?

4. Akshay's marriage

Years passed one after another, till it was the end of B.E. 1275 (A.D. 1869). Akshay's uncle Rameswar came to know of this trend of his mind and began to search for a bride. It was in the month of Chaitra that a suitable bride was found in the village of Kuchakol, not far from Kamarpukur, and Rameswar came to Dakshineswar to take Akshay home. Objections were raised against their starting on the ground that the month of Chaitra was held inauspicious for starting on a journey. Rameswar and Akshay did not pay any heed to it and said that the prohibition of the scriptures was not applicable in the case of home-coming from a temporary residence elsewhere. Akshay's marriage took place shortly after he returned home in the month of Vaisakh of B.E. 1276 (A.D. 1869).

5. Akshay fell severely ill after his marriage, recovered and went back to Dakshineswer

Akshay fell seriously ill when he was in his father-in-law's house a few months after his marriage. Rameswar, on receiving news of this, had him brought to Kamarpukur, where he was placed under treatment and brought round. He was then sent to Dakshineswar. There his looks brightened and his health seemed to be improving, when suddenly he had an attack of fever. Doctors thought it was a simple fever and that he would be rid of it very soon.

6. Akshay fell ill for the second time. The Master had prescience of Akshay's death before he passed away

When he heard that Akshay fell ill in his father-in-law's house shortly after his marriage, the Master, we were told by Hriday, had said, "Hridu, the omens are extremely bad; he has been married to a bride of Rakshasagana; the lad will die, I see." When the fever did not subside even after three or four days, he called Hriday to him and said, "Hridu, doctors have not been able to diagnose the disease. Akshay has a complicated, high and remittent fever. Call a good doctor and administer good treatment to your satisfaction; but the boy, it is certain, will not survive."

7. Hriday's apprehension and behaviour when he was told that Akshay would not survive

Hriday said, "When I heard him say so, I took him to task saying 'Don't, don't uncle, let not such words pass your lips.' He said, 'Do I say so of my own accord? I say things involuntarily under the divine influence; I say what Mother makes me know and say. Do I wish that Akshay should die?' "

8. Akshay's death and the Master's behaviour

Hriday was very much alarmed to hear these words of the Master. He called in good physicians and tried in various ways to cure Akshay. But the disease went on worsening. Akshay suffered for about a month. When his last moment arrived the Master went to his bedside and said, "Akshay, say 'Ganga, Narayana, Aum Rama'." Akshay repeated the Mantra once, twice,

thrice, and passed away. We were told by Hriday that the more he wept at Akshay's death, the more did the Master laugh in ecstasy.

9. The Master's agony at the death of Akshay

Although the Master laughed that way to see from a high plane of spiritual consciousness the death of his dear nephew Akshay of pleasant looks, it is not as if he did not feel a great shock in his heart. Several times he spoke to us of this event long afterwards and said that although during ecstasy he regarded death as but a change of state, he felt a great void at the death of Akshay when he came down to the normal state of consciousness.[1] He could never again live in the mansion of the proprietors after Akshay's death, as it was there that he had passed away.

10. The Master's brother Rameswar was appointed priest

Rameswar, the Master's second elder brother, was appointed to worship Radha-Govinda at Dakshineswar after Akshay's death. But he could not always be at Dakshineswar as he was in charge of the whole management of the household at Kamarpukur. He used to place some suitable and reliable person in charge of his duty at Dakshineswar and occasionally go to his village to stay there. Ramchandra Chattopadhyaya and another person named Dinanath, we were told, officiated for him during his absence.

11. The Master went with Mathur to Ranaghat. The service of the poor as Narayana there

It was during this period that Mathur, accompanied by the Master, went to his zamindari estate and to the house of his own Guru. He did this then perhaps to relieve the feeling of want produced by Akshay's death in the Master's heart. For, just as, on the one hand, the highly devout Mathur regarded the Master as God Himself and followed him implicitly in all spiritual matters, so, on the other, he looked upon him as but an ignorant child to be protected by him in all worldly matters. There the Master saw the extremely miserable condition of the men and women in a village and

was very much moved. He invited them all and made Mathur give each of them oil sufficient to cool their head, a full meal and a piece of new cloth. Hriday said that this event happened at a place called Kalaighat, near Ranaghat, when Mathur, accompanied by him and the Master, was on a boat trip in the Churni canal.

12. The Master saw Mathur's own house and that of his Guru

Hriday told us that Mathur had his own home in the village called Sonabere, near Satkshira. The villages round it were then included in Mathur's estate, to which he took the Master. The home of Mathur's Guru was not far from this place. There was a quarrel going on at the time among the members of the family of the preceptors over the division of their property. They asked Mathur to intercede as a mediator. The village was called Talamargo. On their way Mathur made the Master and Hriday ride on his elephant and himself went in a palanquin.[1] Pleased with the loving service of the sons of Mathur's preceptor, the Master spent a few weeks there before he returned to Dakshineswar.

13. The Master occupied the seat of Sri Chaitanya at the Hari Sabha of Kolutola. He visited Kalna, Navadwip, etc.

Shortly after he visited the houses of Mathur and his Guru and returned to Dakshineswar, there happened a remarkable event connected with the Master at Kolutola in Calcutta. A Hari Sabha, a meeting where Hari's name was sung, used to be in session in the house of Kalinath Datta, otherwise known as Kalinath Dhar. Being invited by the Sabha, the Master went there and in ecstasy sat on the seat reserved in the name and in honour of Sri Chaitanya, the great lord. We have given the reader a detailed description of the incident elsewhere.[1] Not long afterwards, the Master had a desire to visit Navadwip, and Mathur took him to Kalna, Navadwip and some other places. We have told the reader elsewhere how he met the perfected devotee Bhagavan Das at Kalna and what a wonderful vision he had at Navadwip.[2] It was perhaps in 1870 that he went to visit those holy places. He did not feel so deeply inspired while in Navadwip as when passing by the silted-up

shoals in the bed of the Ganga near that place. Asked by Mathur and others the reason of it, the Master said that the old Navadwip containing the spots of Chaitanya's divine sport, had submerged in the river. They had been situated where the shoals now stood. That was why he had deep ecstasy when he passed by them.

14. Mathur's selfless devotion

It will not be out of place to mention here, on Hriday's authority, an event illustrative of Mathur's selfless devotion, attained as the result of the whole-hearted service he had rendered to the Master continually for fourteen long years.

Once Mathur Babu became bed-ridden on account of a boil in a joint of his body. Having come to know of Mathur's eagerness to see the Master at that time, Hriday told the Master of it. But the Master said, "What's the use of my going? Can I cure his boil?" When Mathur found that the Master did not come, he sent messenger after messenger and informed him of his eager desire. After this supplication, the Master had to yield. Mathur's happiness knew no bounds when the Master came to him. He got up with great difficulty, sat reclining against a bolster and said, "Father, give me a little dust of your feet."

The Master said, "Of what avail will it be to you to take the dust of my feet? Will it cure your boil?

Mathur replied, "Father, am I so mean? Do I want the dust of your feet to cure my boil? Doctors enough are there for that purpose. I want the dust of your feet in order to cross the sea of the world."

As soon as Mathur said this, the Master was in ecstasy. Mathur placed his head on his feet and regarded himself as blessed. Tears of bliss streamed out from both his eyes. Mathur was cured of the disease in a short time on that occasion.

15. The profound relation of love between the Master and Mathur

We were told by the Master and Hriday many things about Mathur's devotion to and faith in the Master at that time. Mathur had the firm

conviction that the Master was his only refuge and resort both here and hereafter, The Master's grace for him was also boundless. Although the independent-minded Master felt annoyed now and then at some of Mathur's actions, he forgot them immediately, granted all his requests and tried to do what was conducive to his welfare both in this world and in the next. What a strong and profound loving relation subsisted between the Master and Mathur, is clearly seen in the following anecdote.

16. An anecdote

Once the Master said in ecstasy, "As long, O Mathur, as you live, I shall be here (at Dakshineswar)." Mathur was startled to hear it for he knew that the Mother of the Universe Herself in the person of the Master was always protecting him and his family. Therefore, when he heard it, Mathur thought that the Master would forsake his family after his passing away. He then said very humbly to the Master, "What's this, father? My wife and son Dwaraka are very much devoted to you." Seeing that Mathur was distressed, the Master said, "Very well; I will be here as long as your wife and Dwari live." In fact, it actually turned out to be so. The Master left Dakshineswar for good, shortly after the death of Jagadamba Dasi and Dwarakanath. Jagadamba Dasi died in 1881.[1] The Master was at Dakshineswar for a little more than three years after this event.

17. Another anecdote

On another occasion Mathur said to the Master, "How is this, father? You said your devotees would come; but why are they not coming?" The Master replied, "I don't know how long from now Mother will bring them. But Mother Herself has revealed it to me. Whatever else She made known to me has proved to be true, one by one; who knows why this has not?" So saying the Master was in a depressed mood and thought, "Was that vision of mine then a delusion?" Mathur felt sorry to see him depressed and thought within himself that it was foolish on his part to have raised that topic. In order to console the childlike Master, he then said to him, "Father, let them come or not. I am here, your devotee, always following you obediently. How then

can it be said that your vision has not come true? For, I am myself a host. That is why Mother said, 'Many devotees would come'." The Master said, "What you say may be true; who knows?" Mathur did not proceed further on that topic but raising another, diverted the Master's mind.

18. No wonder that Mathur had such a selfless devotion. What the Sastras say

We have told the reader in the part entitled "As the Spiritual Teacher" how great changes were produced in Mathur's ideas by his keeping the constant company of the Master. Those who render service to a liberated person become, say the scriptures, the recipients of the results of all the good actions done by him. So, is it a wonder that those who serve an incarnation of God should come to be endowed with various divine acquisitions and selfless qualities?

19. Mathur passed away

The ceaseless flow of time with its waves of adversity and prosperity, happiness and misery, union and separation, life and death, brought the world gradually to the year B.E. 1278 (A.D. 1871). The relationship of Mathur with the Master, deepening through the years, reached its fifteenth year. The month of Vaisakh passed, Jyaishtha came and went and a half of Ashar disappeared into the abyss of the past, when Mathur became bed-ridden with fever. Rising rapidly, the fever turned into a complicated and remittent type in a week and Mathur lost his power of speech. The Master knew beforehand that Mother was going to take Her devotee into Her affectionate bosom; Mathur's vow of devotion was completed. Therefore, although he used to send Hriday daily to see Mathur, he never went to see him even once. The last day came and Mathur was taken to Kalighat. The Master did not send even Hriday that day, but remained in deep ecstasy in the afternoon for two or three hours. His body lay at Dakshineswar while he went in a celestial body along a path of light to Mathur, his devotee, and fulfilled the goal of his life—he personally made him ascend to the sphere attainable by a great accumulation of merit.

20. The Master saw the event in Bhavasamadhi

When the Master's ecstasy came to an end, it was past five in the evening. He called Hriday to him and said, "Mathur got into a celestial chariot into which companions of the divine Mother lifted him affectionately and his spirit went to the sphere of the Devi". Hriday remained silent on hearing it. When the night was far advanced, the officers of the Kali temple returned and gave Hriday the news that Mathur had passed away at five in the evening.[1] We heard from the Master on a different occasion and have acquainted the reader with it elsewhere[1], that the highly devout Mathuranath[2] would have to return to this world, as his desire for enjoyment remained unfulfilled.

Footnote

1. III. 1.

1. Hriday said that, while he was going to the village, Mathur asked the Master to go in a palanquin as the road was uneven, and himself rode his elephant. Reaching the village, however; he satisfied the Master’s curiosity by having him seated on the elephant.

1. IV. 3.

2. IV. 3.

1. “Jagadamba died on or about 1st January, 1881, intestate, leaving defendant Trayluksha, then the only son of Mathura, heir surviving.” Quoted from Plaintiff’s statement in High Court Suit No. 203 of 1889.

1. “Mathura Mohan Biswas died in July, 1871, intestate, leaving surviving Jagadamba, sole widow. Bhupal since deceased, a son by his another wife who had pre-deceased him—and Dwarka Nath Biswas since deceased, defendant Trayluksha Nath and Thakurdas alias Dhurmadas, three sons by the said Jagadamba.”

Quoted from plaintiff’s statement in High Court Suit No. 230 of 1889— Shyama Churun Biswas *vs.* Traylulcsha Nath Biswas, Gurudas, Kalidas, Durgadas, and Kumudini.

1. III. 7.

2. He was known as both Mathuranath and Mathuramohan.

CHAPTER XX
THE WORSHIP OF SHODASI

Mathur passed away. But the tenor of life in the Kali temple at Dakshineswar went on as before. Days and months passed and the year 1872 arrived. There happened a special event in the Master's life at that time. We must now go to the house of the Master's father-in-law in the village of Jayramvati if we want to understand the series of events ultimately leading to it.

1. The Holy Mother was very young when she saw the Master for the first time after the marriage

When the Master went with the Bhairavi Brahmani and Hriday to Kamarpukur, his native village, in 1867, the women relatives, as we mentioned before, had his wife brought there. That was, in reality, the first occasion when the Holy Mother met her husband. Anyone who has had the opportunity of comparing the young girls of towns like Calcutta with those of villages like Kamarpukur, will have noticed that the bodies and minds of town-bred girls become developed at an earlier age than those of the villages. In villages, girls of fourteen, and sometimes fifteen or sixteen, do not have the physical signs of their youth fully developed. Their minds also, like their bodies, develop late. This is so perhaps because they have not to live in small places cribbed and cabined like birds confined in cages, but live their lives in a natural way, breathing pure air and roaming freely about in their villages.

2. The mental attitude of the Holy Mother on seeing the Master for the first time

The Holy Mother, therefore, was very young when, at the age of fourteen, she met her husband for the first time. Her powers of understanding, the profound ideal and responsibility of married life were just at the point of unfolding themselves. At that time the pure girl was delighted, experiencing an indescribable celestial bliss in having the divine company of the Master, devoid of body-consciousness, and enjoying his selfless love and attention. On many occasions she used to describe that delight of hers to the women devotees of the Master, saying, "My heart remained incessantly so very full of an indescribable bliss that I have always felt since then, as if a jar of bliss, full to overflowing, was installed in my heart."

3. How the Holy Mother lived at Jayramvati in that happy mood

When, in a few months, the Master returned to Calcutta from Kamarpukur, the girl went to her father's home feeling at heart that she was in possession of an infinite wealth of bliss. The feeling of that delight, we clearly understand, produced a change in all her conduct, speech, movement, work, etc. But, it is doubtful whether people in general could notice it; for, it made her calm and not fickle, thoughtful and not pert, selfless and not self-seeking; and by removing from her heart the feeling of all kinds of want, made her infinitely sympathetic to the sorrows and miseries of humanity, converting her by degrees into an embodiment of compassion itself. On account of the influence of this joy, even endless physical suffering now appeared to her to be of no consequence and she felt no pain at all if her care and affection for others were not returned. Thus, content with the barest physical necessities and lost in herself, the girl lived then in her father's house only physically, her mind dwelling far away at Dakshineswar at the feet of the Master. Although a strong desire arose now and again in her mind to go to him and see him, the girl controlled it, and was patient, thinking all the while that he, who graciously loved her so much at her first meeting with him, could never forget her and would surely call her to him at the proper time. Thus passed days, one after another, and the girl, firm in her faith, awaited that auspicious day.

4. The cause of the Holy Mother's mental anguish and her resolve to come to Dakshineswar

Four long years passed one after another. But the strong current of hope and longing kept on flowing uniformly in the girl's mind. Her body, however, did not continue in the same state as her mind, but, changing daily, it made her a young woman of eighteen in 1872. Although the bliss due to her first meeting with her godlike husband kept her high above daily pain and pleasure, is there the possibility of pure, unadulterated bliss in this world? In their gossip, the menfolk of the village made cutting remarks that her husband was mad, that he cast away even his wearing apparel and roamed about naked repeating "Hari, Hari," etc.; and the women of her age alluded to her as a mad man's wife and looked upon her as an object of pity or contempt. She was much pained at heart by all this, but said nothing. Absorbed in the thought of the Master, she sometimes yielded to doubts, "Is he then not the same person as I saw before? Has such a change as people say really come on him? If by the decree of Providence it has actually happened, I must no longer be here; I must be by his side and serve him." She reflected a great deal and came to the conclusion that she should personally go to Dakshineswar and have all, her doubts cleared in the light of facts and do what she ought to.

5. The opportunity to carry out the resolve into practice

Sri Chaitanya was born on the full moon day of the month of Phalgun, the day of the Dol-yatra, a day of festivity in which Sri Krishna is swung in a swing. Many people from the farthest end of Bengal come every year to Calcutta to bathe on that occasion in the holy waters of the Ganga. A few women distantly related to the Holy Mother had decided that they should go there on that occasion that year. She went to them and expressed her desire to go for a bath in the Ganga. Thinking that it was not reasonable to take her with them without her father's permission, the ladies asked her father Ramchandra Mukhopadhyaya about it. As soon as the intelligent father heard it, he understood why his daughter wanted to go to Calcutta, and made all arrangements to take her himself there.

Thanks to the railways, the distance between Calcutta and far off Kasi or Vrindavan has now vanished. But, not having that blessing in those days, Kamarpukur, the birthplace of the Master, and Jayramvati, the birth-place of the Holy Mother lay as far as ever from Calcutta.

6. The Holy Mother started on foot with her father for a bath in the Ganga. She had fever on the way

This is so even now,[1] let alone those times. In those days the railway lines had not yet been laid either via Vishnupur or via Tarakeswar, nor was Ghatal connected with Calcutta by steamer. Therefore the people of those villages had no other course than to travel by palanquin or on foot. And all people, except the rich, such as zamindars and others, used to have recourse to the latter. So accompanied by his daughter and other companions, Ramchandra started on the long journey on foot. All of them walked with delight for the first two or three days. They saw one paddy field after another and ponds full of lotuses, and enjoyed the cool shades of trees like the peepul and the banian. But that delight did not continue up to the destination. Unaccustomed to the fatigue of journeys, Ramchandra's daughter had a severe attack of fever on the way, which made the father very anxious. Knowing it impossible to proceed farther when his daughter was in that condition, he halted at an inn and stayed there.

7. A wonderful vision the Holy Mother had during her illness

What a terrible anguish the Holy Mother felt in her heart on account of the illness on the way cannot be described. But she had a wonderful vision which consoled her. She sometimes used to describe this vision in the following way to her women devotees:

"I lost all consciousness on account of high temperature and was lying, unable even to look to the propriety of my dress, when I saw a girl come and sit beside me. The girl was black in complexion, but I never had seen such beauty before. She sat by me and began to pass her hand over my head and body. Her hand was so soft and cool that the heat and the burning sensation of my body began to subside. I asked her affectionately, 'May I

know where you come from?' The girl said, 'I come from Dakshineswar.' Astonished to hear it, I said, 'From Dakshineswar! I thought of going there to see him and serve him (the Master); but as I have got this fever on my way, I shall not have the good fortune of, fulfilling that desire.' 'Why not?' said the girl, 'You will surely go to Dakshineswar. Getting well you will go there and see him. It is for you that I have detained him there.' I said, 'Is that so? Pray, tell me, are you related to us?' 'I am your sister,' said she. I said, 'Indeed? That is why you have come!' I had this conversation with her, when I fell asleep."

8. The Holy Mother reached Dakshineswar at night with fever on. The Master's behaviour

Ramchandra rose in the morning to see that his daughter's fever had subsided. He thought it better to continue the journey slowly with her instead of helplessly waiting on the way. Encouraged by the vision of the previous night, the Holy Mother approved his idea eagerly. Scarcely had they walked a little distance when a palanquin became available. She had fever again. But, as it was not severe as on the previous night, she did not lose control over herself. Neither did she mention it to anybody. They gradually reached the journey's end and the Holy Mother came to the Master at Dakshineswar at 9 p.m.

The Master was somewhat worried to see her thus suffering from fever. He arranged for her a separate bed in his own room, lest fever should increase on account of cold, and said with a sigh, "You have come at long last. Alas! my Mathur is no more. Who will take care of you?" On account of the good arrangements made for medicine, diet, etc., the Holy Mother came round in three or four days. The Master kept her in his own room for three or four days and personally supervised everything. He then made arrangements for her to live with his mother in the Nahavatkhana, the music room.

9. The Holy Mother lived there overflowing with joy on account of that behaviour of the Master

Thus were removed the worries caused by rumours. The dust of doubt raised by rumours which was about to cloud her faith, were now scattered in all directions and vanished, when the loving care and anxiety of the Master for her confirmed her in her faith that he was just his former self and that it was only the worldly-minded with no power of discrimination that had spread those false rumours. Her god was the same god, thus mused the Holy Mother, and far from having forgotten her, was as gracious to her as before. Therefore, she decided in no time what she should do. She lived in the Nahavat with a joyful heart and engaged herself in the service of her lord and his mother. Her father, happy in the happiness of his daughter, stayed there for a few days and returned home joyfully.

10. The Master's testing of his knowledge of Brahman. His training of his wife

We have told the reader about the series of thoughts that arose in the Master's mind on the arrival of the Holy Mother at Kamarpukur, when he was staying there in 1867. Remembering the words of Tota Puri regarding the thorough knowledge of Brahman, he was then ready to do his duty by his wife and to test the knowledge attained through his Sadhanas. But he had to come back to Calcutta just when he had begun to accomplish those two purposes. Having her beside him now, he applied his mind again to those two things.

11. The reason why the Master did not do this before

Why then, it may be asked, did he not bring his wife to Dakshineswar before and test his knowledge? It may be said in reply that an ordinary man, no doubt, would have done so. But the Master did not belong to the class of ordinary human beings and therefore his conduct was different. Those who are accustomed to do everything depending entirely on God at all times, do not previously draw up a plan of what they want to do. Instead of depending like us on the limited, little intellect, they await help and hint from the all-pervading intellect of the divine Lord in order to do good either to themselves or to others. They, therefore, are strongly averse to courting a

test of their own accord. They go on behaving continually in full accord with the universal will and if the time for such a test comes of itself, they proceed forward gladly to submit to it. The Master did not go forward of himself to test the depth of his own divine knowledge. But when he saw that his wife had come to him at Kamarpukur and that, if he was to perform his duty by her, he must stand that test, then alone was he ready to submit. Again, when by the will of God that opportunity was gone and he had to come to Calcutta and live away from his wife, he did not voluntarily try to bring about the same opportunity once again. Until she herself came, he did not make the slightest effort to bring the Holy Mother to Dakshi-neswar. We can thus find even by means of our ordinary intellect, a congruity running through all the phases of the Master's behaviour towards her. Besides, he knew, it may be urged, with his Yogic vision, that such was the will of God.

12. The Master's method of teaching. How he behaved with the Holy Mother at that time

Now when the Master saw that the time to submit to the test in the matter of discharging his duties to his wife had arrived once again, he was perfectly ready to do so. Whenever an opportunity arose, he used to teach the Holy Mother everything about the aim and duties of human life. It is said that during this time he told the Holy Mother, "Just as 'uncle' moon is the uncle of all children, so, God is everybody's own. Every one has the privilege of calling on Him. Whoever calls on Him, will be blessed by His vision. If you call on Him, you also will see Him." The Master's teaching did not end with merely giving instructions to the disciple. He would keep the disciple with him, make him in all respects his own, through love and affection and then give him instructions. Even at that, the Master would not stop. He would keep a keen eye on how far the disciple carried them into practice; and if the disciple acted by mistake contrary to his instructions, he would correct him by pointing it out to him. He, it is clear, now adopted the same method with respect to the Holy Mother also. How far he made her his own through love from the very first day is clear from the facts that he asked her to live in his own room as soon as she came and that, when she had recovered from illness, he gave her permission to share his own bed

every night. We have told the reader elsewhere[1] about the Master's pure and immaculate behaviour towards the Holy Mother at that time, and we shall not repeat it here. We shall say a word or two not mentioned there.

13. How the Master looked upon the Holy Mother

One day during this period, while she was massaging the Master's feet, the Holy Mother asked him, "How do you look on me?" Out came the reply "The Mother who is in the temple, the Mother who has given birth to this body and is now living in the Nahavat—the same Mother is now massaging my feet. Truly, I always look upon you as a form of the blissful divine Mother."

14. The Master tested his self-control

On another occasion, seeing the Holy Mother asleep by his side, the Master addressed his own mind and started discriminating, "This is, O mind, a female body. People look upon it as an object of great enjoyment, a thing highly prized, and they die for enjoying it. But if one goes for it, one has to remain confined in the body and cannot realize God who is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. Do not, O mind, harbour one thought within and a contrary attitude without. Say in truth whether you want to have it or God. If you want it, it is here before you, have it." He discriminated thus; but scarcely had he entertained in his mind the idea of touching the person of the Holy Mother, when his mind shrank and at once lost itself so deeply in Samadhi that it did not regain its normal consciousness that night. He had to be brought back with great effort to normal consciousness the next morning by the repeated utterance of the name of God in his ears.

15. No incarnation of God behaved with his wife as the Master did. Its result

What we have heard from the Master's lips about the divine sport of himself and the Holy Mother at that time, when he was in the full bloom of his youth and she in her new bloom, is not known to be true of any other

incarnation of God in the spiritual history of the world. Charmed to hear these things, the human heart comes naturally to believe in the divine nature of the couple and feels compelled to have heart-felt love and reverence for them. The Master, free from body-consciousness, passed whole nights in ecstasy at this time. And, even when he used to come down to the plane of normal consciousness at the end of his ecstasy, his mind dwelt in such an exalted state that body-consciousness like that of ordinary people never arose in it even for a moment.

16. What the Master said about the extraordinary nature of the Holy Mother

Thus months rolled on and more than a year passed away. Still, the self-control of the wonderful Master and of his equally wonderful holy spouse, did not give way. Not even for a moment by way of inadvertence did their minds consider physical union to be pleasing and desirable. Remembering what happened at that time, the Master said to us now and again, "Had she (the Holy Mother) not been so pure and had she, losing herself, assailed me, who knows if my self-control would not have broken down and body-consciousness arisen? I had importunately asked the divine Mother after my marriage to keep her mind absolutely free from lust. Having lived with her at that time, I knew that the divine Mother had really heard and granted that prayer."

17. The Master's resolve after he successfully stood the test

When, even at the end of a year, body-consciousness never arose in him for a moment and he could not look upon or think of the Holy Mother as any other than a part of the universal Mother or as Brahman, the Master became convinced that the divine Mother had made him successfully stand the test and by Her grace, his mind was now established in the divine state in an easy and natural way. He now felt in his heart of hearts that his Sadhana, by the grace of the Mother, had been perfectly completed and that his mind was so much absorbed in Her lotus feet that there was no possibility of any desire contrary to Her will arising in it knowingly or

unknowingly. Ordained by the divine Mother, an extraordinary desire arose in his heart now, which he carried into practice without the slightest hesitation. We shall now tell the reader in a connected way what we heard about it now and then from the Master and the Holy Mother.

18. The preparations for the worship of Shodasi

A little more than half of the month of Jyaishtha, B.E. 1280 (A.D. May 25, 1873) had elapsed. It was the new-moon day, the holy occasion for the worship of the Phalaharini Kali Devi. It was the day of a special festival at the Dakshineswar temple. The Master had made special preparations on that day with a view to worshipping the Mother of the universe. These preparations, however, had not been made in the temple, but, privately, in his own room at his desire. A wooden seat painted with Alimpana, the pigment of rice powder, for the Devi to sit on at the time of worship, had been placed to the right of the worshipper. The sun had set. The new-moon night veiled in deep darkness had alighted on the earth. Hriday, the Master's nephew, had to perform a special worship of the Devi in the temple. He had, therefore, helped as much as possible in the preparations of the Master's worship and had gone away to the temple. Having finished the nocturnal service and worship of Radha-Govinda, the first priest, Dinu, came to help the Master in the preparations. It was 9 p.m. when all the preparations for the mystery-worship of the Devi were completed. In the meantime, the Master had sent word to the Holy Mother to be present during the worship. She came to the room and the Master started the worship.

19. The Master sprinkled consecrated water on the Holy Mother and worshipped her

The articles of worship were purified by the Mantras and all the rites preliminary to the worship were finished. The Master beckoned to the Holy Mother to sit on the wooden seat decorated with Alimpana. While witnesing the worship, the Holy Mother had already entered into a divine semiconscious state. Not clearly conscious, therefore, of what she was doing, she, like one charmed with Mantras, sat facing north to the right of

the Master, who was seated with his face to the east. According to scriptural injunctions the Master sprinkled the Holy Mother repeatedly with the water purified by Mantras from the pitcher placed before him. He then uttered the Mantra in her hearing and then recited the prayer:

"O Lady, O Mother Tripurasundari, who art the controller of all powers, open the door to perfection; purify her (the Holy Mother's) body and mind, manifest Thyself in her and be beneficent."

20. He went into Samadhi at the end of the worship. He offered Japa, worship, etc., at the feet of the Devi

Afterwards the Master performed the Nyasa of the Mantras in the Holy Mother's person according to the injunctions of the Sastras, and worshipped her with the sixteen articles, as the Devi Herself. He then offered food and put a part of it to her mouth with his own hand. The Holy Mother lost normal consciousness and went into Samadhi. The Master too uttering Mantras in the semiconscious state, entered into complete Samadhi. The worshipper in Samadhi became perfectly identified and united with the Devi in Samadhi.

A long time passed. The second quarter of the night had long passed. The Master, happy only in the Self, now showed a little sign of regaining normal consciousness. Returning to the semiconscious state again, he offered himself to the Devi. He now gave away for ever at the lotus feet of the Devi his all—the results of his Sadhanas, his rosary etc.— along with his self, and saluted her uttering the Mantras:

"O Thou, auspiciousness of all auspicious things, O doer of all actions, O refuge, O three-eyed One, O Thou fair-complexioned spouse of Siva, O Narayani, I bow down to Thee, I bow down to Thee."

The worship was at an end. The Master's Sadhana reached its culmination with the worship of the Ruler of the universe, the divine Mother in the body of a woman, the embodiment of spiritual knowledge itself; the god-man attained perfection in all respects.

21. As the Holy Mother's sleep was disturbed on account of the Master's constant Samadhi, she went to bed elsewhere. Later she went back to Kamarpukur

The Holy Mother stayed with the Master for about five months after the worship of Shodasi. She now, as before, engaged herself in the service of the Master and the Master's mother, spent the day-time in the Nahavat and shared the same bed with the Master at night. The Master had continual Bhava samadhi night and day. Sometimes his mind suddenly merged in the Nirvikalpa Samadhi in such a way that signs of death were manifested in his body. Apprehensive of the uncertainty of the time when such a state might come on him, the Holy Mother could have no sleep at night. When on one occasion the Master did not come down to normal consciousness from Samadhi for a long time, she was alarmed, and not knowing what she should do, disturbed the sleep of Hriday and others. His Samadhi came to an end when Hriday came and uttered the names of God in his ears for a pretty long time. Coming to know of all this after his Samadhi broke, and also of the disturbance of the Holy Mother's sleep every night, the Master made arrangements for her taking her bed with his mother at the Nahavat. She lived thus for about a year and four months with the Master at Dakshineswar and returned to Kamarpukur probably some time in October 1873.

Footnote

1. One can now take a train from Howrah to Vishnupur or to Tarakeswar and then travel by bus to Jayramvati and Kamarpukur; or one can travel directly by car from Howrah to Kamarpukur.—Pub.

1. III. 4.

CHAPTER XXI
EPILOGUE TO THE STORY OF THE MASTER'S SADHANAS

1. The Master's desire for Sadhana came to an end with the worship of Shodasi

The Master's vow of Sadhana was completed with the worship of Shodasi. The holy fire of passion for God-inebriation, which was burning constantly in his heart, keeping him restless for twelve long years and engaging him in practices in various moods without allowing him any rest even after a mood was over, received now the Purnahuti, the completing oblation, and ceased to burn. And what else could it do? For, was there now anything left which he might call his own and which he had not already offered as oblation to it? He had long ago sacrificed to it all the desirable things of the world—wealth, honour, name, fame, etc. He had offered as an oblation to the terrible flames, one after another, his heart, vital forces, mind, intellect, memory, egoism, etc. The only thing that had still been there was the desire to see the Mother of the universe in various relations and forms by travelling along different paths of discipline. That desire also he now offered to the fire, to the last particle, so to say. What, therefore, could it do, but subside?

2. For, what was left for him to do after finishing the Sadhanas according to all faiths?

Knowing the eagerness of the Master's heart, the divine Mother, he saw, had bestowed on him first the blessing of Her vision and afterwards brought him into contact with persons of extraordinary noble qualities with whose

help he could tread along various scriptural paths, thus giving him the opportunity of comparing his first vision of Hers with the ultimate results of all the Sadhanas. So, what could he ask of Her now? He also saw that the practices prescribed in the sixty-four Tantras had all been practised by him one after another; and that all the disciplines connected with the five moods of the Vaishnava faith prevalent in India had been gone through by him according to scriptural methods; that, following the eternal Vedic path and being initiated in Sannyasa, he had had the vision of the formless and attributeless divine Mother; and that, by Her inscrutable play, he had had the sure result of the practices according to Islam, which had sprung into existence outside India. So what could he now ask the divine Mother to show or tell him?

3. He attained perfection in a marvellous way according to the religion founded by Lord Jesus

But, a year after, the mind of the Master again looked forward to the vision of the divine Mother through another path. He had by that time become acquainted with Sambhuchandra Mallick who read the Bible to him. Thus he came to know of the pure life of Jesus and of the faith he founded. Scarcely had that desire arisen in his mind when the divine Mother fulfilled it in a marvellous way and blessed him. He had, therefore, no need to make any special effort for it. The event happened thus: The garden house of Jadunath Mallick is situated to the south of the Kali temple at Dakshineswar; the Master used to go there now and then for a walk. Jadunath and his mother had great devotion to the Master from the time they first had seen him. Therefore, even if they were not present in the garden at the time of the Master's walk there, the officers would open the door of the parlour and ask him to sit and rest there for some time. There were some good pictures hanging on the walls of that room. One of those pictures was that of the child Jesus in his mother's lap. The Master used to say that he sat one day in that parlour and was looking intently at that picture and thinking of the extraordinary life of Jesus, when he felt that the picture came to life, and effulgent rays of light, coming out from the bodies of the mother and the Child, entered into his heart and changed radically all

the ideas of his mind! On finding that all the inborn Hindu impressions disappeared into a secluded corner of his mind and that different ones arose in it, he tried in various ways to control himself and prayed earnestly to the divine Mother, "What strange changes art Thou bringing about in me, Mother?" But nothing availed. Rising with a great force, the waves of those impressions completely submerged the Hindu ideas in his mind. His love and devotion, to the Devas and Devis vanished, and in their stead, a great faith in and reverence for Jesus and his religion occupied his mind, and began to show him Christian padrees offering incense and light before the image of Jesus in the Church and to reveal to him the eagerness of their hearts as is seen in their earnest prayers. The Master came back to Dakshineswar temple and remained constantly absorbed in the meditation of those inner happenings. He forgot altogether to go to the temple of the divine Mother and pay obeisance to Her. The waves of those ideas had mastery over his mind in that manner for three days. At last, when the third day was about to close, the Master saw, while walking under the Panchavati, that a marvellous god-man of very fair complexion was coming towards him, looking steadfastly at him. As soon as the Master saw that person, he knew that he was a foreigner. He saw that his long eyes had produced a wonderful beauty in his face, and the tip of his nose, though a little flat, did not at all impair that beauty. The Master was charmed to see the extraordinary divine expression of that handsome face, and wondered who he was. Very soon the person approached him and from the bottom of the Master's pure heart came out with a ringing sound, the words, "Jesus! Jesus the Christ, the great Yogi, the loving Son of God, one with the Father, who gave his heart's blood and put up with endless torture in order to deliver men from sorrow and misery!" Jesus, the god-man, then embraced the Master and disappeared into his body and the Master entered into ecstasy, lost normal consciousness and remained identified for some time with the Omnipresent Brahman with attributes. Having attained the vision of Jesus thus, the Master became free from the slightest doubt about Christ's having been an incarnation of God.

4. How the Master's vision of the form of Jesus was proved to be true to fact

When we were visiting the Master long after this event, one day he raised the topic of Jesus and said, “Well, boys, you have read the Bible; can you tell me what is written in it about the physical features of Jesus? How did he look?” We said, “Sir, we have not seen this mentioned anywhere in the Bible; but as he was born a Jew, he must have been very fair in complexion, with long eyes and an aquiline nose to be sure.” When told so, the Master said, “But I saw that the tip of his nose was a little flat; I don’t know why I saw him like that.” Though we did not then say anything about what the Master said, we thought, “How could the form seen by him in ecstasy tally with the actual form of Jesus? Like all the Jews he too must have had an aquiline nose.” But we came to know, shortly after the Master passed away, that there were three different descriptions of Jesus’ physical features; and according to one of them the tip of his nose was a little flat.

5. What the Master said about Buddha’s being an incarnation of God and about his faith

Knowing the Master to have been perfected according to all the main religions prevalent in the world, the reader may wonder within himself what his idea about Buddha was. It is therefore but fair that we record here what is known to us about it. The Master regarded Buddha as what the Hindus in general believe him to be; that is, he always offered his loving worship and reverence to Buddha as an incarnation of God and believed that the incarnation of Buddha continued even then to be manifest in the image at Puri of “the three gems” in the forms of Jagannath, Subhadra and Balaram. When he heard that the glory of the above-mentioned holy place, was that, by the grace of Jagannath, it obliterated all feelings of difference and thereby all distinctions due to caste, he felt an intense desire to visit it. But he gave up that idea,[1] when he came to know that he would not survive the visit and understood, with the help of Yogic powers, that the will of the divine Mother in that respect was against his going. We have already spoken of the Master’s unalterable faith in the purifying power of the waters of the Ganga, which he looked upon as being Brahman Itself in the liquid form (Brahma-vari). He had an equally firm faith that the mind of a man attached to worldly objects becomes immediately pure and gets fit to grasp

spiritual ideas when he takes food offered to Jagannath. When compelled to be in the company of worldly people for some time, he took, immediately afterwards, a little water of the Ganga and the "Atke" Mahaprasad, the cooked rice offered to Jagannath, and asked his disciples also to do the same. Besides what has been said above about the Master's faith in Buddha as an incarnation of God, we came to know of another fact about this matter. When the great poet, Girishchandra Ghosh, the highly devout follower of the Master, published his drama, *Buddhacharita,* depicting the divine play of Buddha, the Master witnessed it staged and said, "It is certain that Buddha was an incarnation of God. There is no difference between the faith founded by him and the Vedic path of knowledge." Our conviction is that the Master came to know this through Yogic vision, and so said this.

6. The Master's faith in the Jaina and Sikh religions

The Master heard from the Jainas and the Sikhs, in the latter part of his life, many things about the Tirthankaras, the founders of the Jaina religion and the ten Gurus from Nanak to Govinda, the founders of the Sikh religion and had much love and respect for them. Besides the pictures of deities, there was a stone image of Mahavira the Tirthankara, and a picture of Jesus on one side of his room. The Master offered every morning and evening burning incense before them both, as before all other pictures. But, although he thus showed great love and reverence for them, we did not hear him describing any of the Tirthankaras or any of the ten Gurus as an incarnation of God. About the ten Gurus of the Sikhs, he used to say, "They are all incarnations of the Rishi Janaka. The royal Rishi Janaka, I have been told by the Sikhs, had a desire in his mind on the eve of his liberation, to do good to the people. He, therefore, was born ten times as a Guru, from Nanak to Govinda, and having established religion among the Sikhs, became eternally united with the supreme Brahman. There is no reason why this saying of the Sikhs should not be true."

7. The re-statement of the Master's extraordinary experiences after he became perfected in the Sadhanas according to all faiths

When he became perfect according to all Sadhanas, the Master had a few unique experiences. Of these experiences (1) some were concerning himself and (2) some were about spiritual matters in general. Although we have already told the reader some of them we shall mention here the principal ones. While dwelling constantly in the Mother in Bhavamukha at the end of the period of his Sadhanas, he seemed to have understood perfectly the meaning of those experiences. Although the Master had them with the help of his Yogic vision, we shall here give a rational explanation of them.

8. Experiences about himself:

(1) he is an incarnation of God

Firstly, the Master had the conviction that he was an incarnation of God, an Adhikarika Purusha, all of whose spiritual efforts were for the sake of others. Comparing the Sadhaka-life of others with his, he could see a great difference between them with the help of his reason. He saw that an ordinary aspirant practised one spiritual mood all his life and that when he realized the vision of God according to that mood, he had complete satisfaction in his mind. But his own case was not like that. He required a very short time for being successful in the discipline according to each mood and could have no satisfaction in his mind till he practised disciplines according to all moods and faiths. An effect can never be produced but by a cause; a search on his part for the cause of the above-mentioned fact led him to profound meditation and showed him the reason given above. It showed him that his condition was unique because he was an especial incarnation of God the Almighty, who is ever free, ever pure and ever awakened. It made him realize, further, that all his extraordinary spiritual practices had brought a new light from the spiritual world and that they had all been practised for the good of others and not for the satisfaction of his own personal wants.

(2) there is no liberation for him

He was convinced that, unlike the Jivas, he would not attain liberation. It does not take one long to understand this even with the help of ordinary reasoning. How can there be any talk of liberation for one who is eternally non-separate from God being an especial part of Him—who is always free, pure, and awakened and who has no want or limitation at all? As long as God's work of doing good to Jivas continues, he will have to incarnate himself from age to age and do that work. So how can he have liberation? The Master used to say, "An administrator has to run to wherever there is any disorder in the estate." This was not the only thing about himself that the Master knew with the help of his Yogic vision. Pointing to the north-western direction, he told us over and over again that he would have to come to that region on the next occasion. Some[1] assert that he gave them the time of his next advent and said, "I shall have to come to that side in two hundred years. Many will be liberated then. Those who do not get liberation at that time, will have to wait very long for it thereafter."

and (3) he knew when he would pass away

The Master came to know in Bhavasamadhi the time of his passing away long before it happened. While under a spiritual inspiration one day at Dakshineswar, he said to the Holy Mother, "When you will see me taking food out of the hands of anyone and everyone, passing nights in Calcutta, and taking the food a part of which has been already taken by someone else, know that the time of my passing away is near at hand." The aforasaid words of the Master proved to be literally true.

On another occasion there, while in a spiritual mood, the Master said to the Holy Mother, "I shall not take anything except porridge during my last days." We have elsewhere said how this came true.[1]

We shall now record the second kind of his experiences, namely, those regarding spiritual matters in general:

9. Experiences about spiritual matters in general:

(1) all religions are true—as many faiths so many paths

After attaining perfection according to all the faiths, the Master had the firm conviction that all religions were true; that all the faiths were but so many paths. It can be said that the Master realized it both by his Yogic powers and by reason. For, performing Sadhanas according to all the faiths, he realized in his life the ultimate result of each kind of discipline. It does not take one long to understand that the purpose of the advent of the Master, the incarnation of the present age,, is to promulgate the truth mentioned above and stop the decline of faiths and end the quarrels among them. For, no other incarnation of God had fully realized this truth in his life with the help of Sadhana and taught it to the world heretofore. If the positions of the incarnations of God are to be determined on the basis of the liberality of the spiritual doctrines they held, the highest place must undoubtedly be accorded to the Master for preaching that doctrine.

(2) man must accept doctrine of dualism, qualified non-dualism or non-dualism according to the state of his mind

Secondly, the doctrines of dualism, qualified non-dualism and non-dualism came of themselves to each man with his spiritual progress. The Master, therefore, said that they were not contradictory to one another but depended on particular stages of evolution of the human mind. A little thinking makes it clear what immense help man can derive in understanding the vast religious literature through this realization of the Master. Words cannot express adequately what an endless confusion has been produced and how intricate the path to spirituality has been rendered by the three aforesaid doctrines discovered by the Rishis and recorded in the Vedas, Upanishads and other scriptures. Unable to find out their proper harmony with one another, the followers of each of these doctrines did their best to prove by torturing the texts, that all of them preach the doctrine, as interpreted by them. The result of that attempt of the commentators is that there arises a dread in the minds of the people at the very name of religious discussions for the determination of the Sastraic truths. And this fear has produced a lack of faith in the Sastras, leading to the spiritual degradation of India. It was, therefore, necessary for the Master, the incarnation of the age, to realize all the three doctrines in different stages of his own life and

propagate among all men their wonderful harmony. The only way that will lead us to the understanding of the Sastras is to remember always this conclusion of the Master. Remember what the Master said on this topic:

"Know that the non-dual state of consciousness is the ultimate one to be realized; it is a realization that is beyond mind and speech.

"Only the states up to qualified non-dualism can be understood by mind and intellect and expressed in words. In that state both the absolute and the relative are equally eternal. The Lord Himself, His name and His abode—all are of pure consciousness.

"For ordinary human beings, in whom the attachment to worldly objects prevails, dualism is commendable. For them the loud singing of the Lord's name, His glory, His powers, etc., as directed in the *Narada Pancharatra,* is advisable."

(3) people in general will progress by resorting to Karmayoga

The Master put limits to the performance of actions also for the spiritual development of man and said, " The actions of a man with a predominance of Sattva naturally drop off. He cannot perform them in spite of his efforts to do so—to put it in another way, God does not allow him to do so. Take for example a householder's daughter-in-law; the more she approaches confinement, the more do her household duties drop off and when the child is born, she has nothing more to do except nurse it. But, all other people should depend on God and perform all actions like the maid servant[1] in a rich man's family, in the parable. To perform actions in this way is what is called Karmayoga. To repeat continuously God's name, together with meditation on Him, and to perform all actions in the aforesaid manner—this is the path."

(4) a community given to this liberal view is to be founded

The Master realized that, as an instrument in the hands of the Mother of the universe, he would have to found a new communion especially fit for the liberal faith revealed in his own life. The Master realized all this during the life-time of Mathur Babu. The Mother told him, he said to Mathur, that

many devotees would come to him to attain spirituality. It is superfluous to add that it turned out to be literally true. Once at the Kasipur garden, the Master looked at his own photograph and said to us, “This is a picture showing a very high state of Yoga. It[1] will be worshipped hereafter in every house”.

and (5) those who are in their last life will accept his doctrine

Having known, with the help of his Yogic power, that those who were in their last birth would come to him to attain spirituality, he had quite a firm conviction about it. We have given the reader our own opinion about it elsewhere.[2] It is, therefore, needless to repeat it here.

10. The opinions expressed by three eminent Sadhakas well versed in the Sastras, on seeing the Master at different time

Three eminent Sadhaka-pandits, well versed in the scriptures, came to the Master during three important periods of his Sadhana, saw with their own eyes his spiritual states and had the opportunity of having discussions on them. Pandit Padmalochan saw the Master after the latter had attained perfection in the Tantric practices. Pandit Vaishnavacharan met him after his success in the Vaishnava disciplines, and Pandit Gauri had the privilege of seeing the Master possessed of the divine splendour produced by the Sadhana when the latter had finished all his spiritual practices. Padmalochan saw the Master and said, “I see in you divine power and manifestation.” Composing a hymn in Sanskrit, Vaishnavacharan sang it to the Master in ecstasy, describing him as an incarnation of God. Similarly, Gauri, when he saw the Master, said to him, “I see tangibly realized in you all the high spiritual states recorded in the scriptures read by me. Besides, I see in you the manifestation of such exalted states as are not recorded in them. Your state has far transcended those mentioned in the Vedas, Vedantas, and the Sastras. You are not a mortal being. The Reality from which incarnations originate, is there in you.” When we study the extraordinary story of the Master’s life and his wonderful experiences mentioned before, we can clearly comprehend that those prominent

Sadhaka-pandits did not speak the aforesaid words by way of flattery. The dates of the coming to Dakshineswar of those scholars have been ascertained in the following way:

11. The time of the coming of the Pandits ascertained

While she was staying at Dakshineswar for the first time, the Holy Mother saw Pandit Gauri there. Again, we were told by the Master that the Pandit came to Dakshineswar when Mathur Babu was alive. Therefore, he seems to have come to Dakshineswar some time in 1871 and stayed with the Master there till 1873. The Master always cherished a desire to see those Sadhaka-pandits who tried to carry into practice the scriptural knowledge acquired by them in their lives. As Bhattacharya Sri Gaurikanta Tarkabhusan (for, that was his full name) belonged to this class of Sadhakas, the Master had the desire to see him, and had him brought to Dakshineswar through Mathur who invited him to come there. The Pandit was an inhabitant of the village of Indesh near the Master's birthplace. Hriday's brother Ramratan went with Mathur's letter of invitation to Gaurikanta and brought him to the holy temple at Dakshineswar. We have elsewhere[1] told the reader about the wonderful power which came to him from his Sadhana and the way in which he renounced the world after he came to Dakshineswar, saw the Master and had intense detachment growing gradually in his heart.

The date of the Annameru, the gift of a "mountain of food", has been ascertained to be 1864 in the book entitled "The story of the life of Rani Rasmani". We were told by the Master about the eagerness of Mathur to have Padmalochan brought to Dakshineswar by invitation and to make him accept gifts at that time. Therefore, the year 1864 may be said to be the time when Bhattacharya Sri Padmalochan Tarkalankar, the Vedantic scholar, came to the Master.

The time when Pandit Vaishnavacharan, the son of Utsavananda Goswami, came to Dakshineswar, can easily be ascertained. For, we have heard from the Master about his discussion at Dakshineswar of the supernal nature of the Master, at first with Yogeswari, the Bhairavi Brahmani, and, afterwards, with Gaurikanta Tarkabhusan. Like the Brahmani,

Vaishnavacharan saw manifested in the Master's mind and body all the signs of the Mahabhava spoken of in the Vaishnava scriptures, and he got lost in astonishment and agreed with the Bhairavi in her conclusion that the Master was a reincarnation of Gauranga. When one hears the above-mentioned words of the Master, it becomes clear to one that Vaishnavacharan came to the Master in 1865 after the latter had become perfected in the discipline of the Madhura Bhava. Vaishnavacharan frequented Dakshineswar now and again till 1873.

12. The Master's desire to see his devotees of the inner circle. He cried out for them

As he was inspired by God, a new and strong desire arose in the mind of the Master after he had had the experiences mentioned before. He became very anxious to meet his devotees, previously seen in his Yogic visions, and to impart his own power of spirituality to them. "That anxiety," said the Master, "had no limit. With great difficulty I put up with that constant anxiety throughout the day-time. Hearing the vain worldly topics of the worldly people which verily seemed to be poison to me, I used to think that, when they would all come, I would have pleasant conversations on God with them, which would pacify my mind and heart and refresh my ears. I would then tell them my own spiritual experiences and lighten the burden of my heart. The idea of their coming got associated with everything in and around me and led me to think incessantly of them. I kept myself in readiness regarding what I should say or give to each one of them. When the day ended and evening came, I could no longer control that surge of anxiety by any amount of patience; the thought arose that another day had passed away and none of them had come. When the temples rang with sounds of conchs, bells, etc., I got up to the roof of the 'mansion' of the proprietors. Being restless on account of the anguish of my heart, I called out at the top of my voice and with tears in my eyes, 'Where are you, my children? Do come, one and all. I cannot do any more without seeing you', and I filled the quarters with loud cries. So great were my anxiety and restlessness that it is doubtful whether a mother desires so intensely to meet her child; nor had I ever heard of a pair of lovers or friends behaving that

way in order to be united with each other. A few days after this, the devotees began to come one by one."

A few important events took place before the devotees came to Dakshineswar at that anxious call of the Master. As they are not directly connected with the present part of the book, we record them in the appendix.

Footnote

1. IV. 3.

1. The great poet Girishchandra Ghosh and others.

1. III. 2.

1. “A maid servant serves in a rich man’s family, attends carefully to all her duties, takes care of all the articles of the house, brings up the children as her own, fondles and suckles them, behaves with other people and families in a manner befitting a member of the family and she serves and even quarrels with others for the sake of the family. But she knows all the while that she is not one of the family and that a word from the master or the mistress is enough to send her away from there and that her real home and her own people are in a far-off village.

Similarly, O man of the world, live in the world, mix with the members of your family, and serve them as dutifully as you can, but know in your heart of hearts that they are none of yours and that your home and your real relatives are there in the kingdom of heaven, God being the very centre of them all, their life and their being.” — *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.* (Collected from various parts of the book and adapted)—Tr.

1. The photograph in the sitting posture of the Master in Samadhi.

2. IV. 4.

1. III. 1.

APPENDIX
THE PRINCIPAL EVENTS OF THE MASTER'S LIFE FROM AFTER THE WORSHIP OF THE SHODASI TO THE COMING OF HIS 'MARKED' DEVOTEES

1. The death of Rameswar

We have told the reader that the Holy Mother came back to Kamarpukur in the month of October, 1873, after the worship of Shodasi. Shortly after her arrival there, Rameswar, the second elder brother of the Master, died of typhoid. Spirituality in some form or other was manifest in the life of each man and woman belonging to the Master's paternal lineage. We have heard many things illustrative of this in regard to Rameswar.

2. Rameswar's charitable nature

Rameswar was a man of a very liberal nature. He would give unhesitatingly to Sannyasins and Fakirs, coming to his door, whatever they asked for, provided it was there in the house. We were told by his relatives that Fakirs used to come and want many things—one, a cooking pot, another a water-pot, a third a blanket and so on,—and Rameswar brought them all out from the house and gave them away to them. If any member of the house raised an objection, he calmly said, "Let them take them; do not say anything; many such articles we shall have again; why do you bother?" Rameswar had some knowledge of astrology too.

3. The Master's prescience of Rameswar's death and his warning to him

When Rameswar was going home from Dakshineswar for the last time, the Master knew that he would not have to return from there, and in an ecstasy, said to him, “You are going home, I see; go, but do not share the bed with your wife; if you do, it is doubtful whether you will survive.” One of us[1] heard this from the Master himself later.

4. Thinking that the life of his mother would be in danger at the news of Rameswar’s death, the Master pray to the divine Mother. The result of the prayer

Shortly after Rameswar reached home, word came that he was ill. When the Master heard it, he said to Hriday, “He did not obey the prohibition; it is doubtful whether his life will be saved.” After five or six days the news came that Rameswar had passed away. The Master was much afraid that the news of the death of her son would be a great shock to his aged mother. He went to the temple and prayed plaintively to the Universal Mother to save her from grief. Then the Master went with tears in his eyes, we were told by himself, from the temple to the Nahavat to break the news and to console his mother. The Master said, “I was afraid that mother would completely lose her consciousness on hearing it and was doubtful whether her life would be saved. But, in fact, the contrary happened. Mother heard the news, expressed a little grief and started consoling me saying, “The world is transitory; die every one must some day; it is, therefore, useless to grieve,” and so on. It seemed to me that the divine Mother had tuned her mind to a high pitch like a Tanpura keyed up to a very high note and that was why worldly grief and sorrow could not touch her. When I noticed this I saluted the divine Mother again and again and became free from anxiety.”

5. The behaviour of Rameswar when he knew that death was near at hand

Rameswar knew the time of his death five or six days before the event took place. He told his relatives of it and made all preparations for his obsequies and the Sraddha ceremony. Seeing a mango tree in front of the house being cut down for some reason, he said, “It is good; the wood will

be of use in my funeral rites." He uttered the holy name of Sri Ramachandra till his last moments. He lay unconscious only for a short while before he passed away. Before his death Rameswar requested his relatives not to cremate his body in the burning ground but to bury it on the road by it. Asked the reason for it, he said, "I shall attain a high heaven by virtue of the touch of the dust of the many Sadhus' feet treading the road." Rameswar died at dead of night.

6. After his death Rameswar talked with his friend Gopal

Rameswar and a man of the village, named Gopal, had been friends for a long time. Gopal said that after Rameswar's death at that time on that day, he heard a tap at the door of his home and, on enquiry, got the reply, "I am Rameswar, going to take a dip in the Ganga. There is Raghuvir there, in the house; please see that His worship does not suffer in any way". When Gopal was about to open the door at the call of his friend, he was told again, "I have no body; so, you will not be able to see me even if you open the door." Gopal opened the door in spite of that but found no one there. He then went to Rameswar's house to know if what he had heard was true and found that Rameswar had actually passed away.

7. Ramlal, the Master's nephew, came to Dakshineswar and was appointed priest. The temple of Annapurna at Chanak

Ramlal Chattopadhyaya says that his father, Rameswar, died in 1873 at the age of about forty-eight. He collected the ashes of his deceased father and came to Vaidyavati near Calcutta and immersed them in the Ganga. He then crossed the river there by boat for the Purpose of coming to the Master at Dakshineswar. Looking at Barrackpur while crossing the river, he saw that the temple to the Devi Annapurna which was being constructed on behalf of Jagadamba Dasi, the wife of Mathur Babu, was then half-built. The installation of the Devi took place afterwards in 1875. At Rameswar's death, his son Ramlal was appointed priest to perform worship at Dakshineswar.

8. The story of Sambhu Mallick, second supplier of the Master's necessaries

When Mathur died, Sambhuchandra Mallick of Sinduriapati, Calcutta, came to be acquainted with the Master and developed great love and reverence for him[1]. Sambhu had at this time a great love for the religion practised by the Brahmo Samaj. He became known to the people of Calcutta on account of his great munificence. His love and devotion to the Master became deeper day by day and he had the privilege of serving him like Mathur. Sambhu was glad to supply his wants, whenever he came to know of any. He continued to serve him to the last of his days and felt highly gratified. Sambhu addressed the Master as "Guruji", honoured preceptor. Annoyed at it, the Master said, "Who is the Guru and who is the disciple? You are my Guru." But, instead of desisting, Sambhu called him so all his life. His addressing the Master that way is a clear proof of the fact that Sambhu had received much light on his spiritual path because of the Master's divine company, under the influence of which his religious life was crowned with complete success. His wife also offered her heart-felt worship to the Master as God Himself, and when the Holy Mother stayed at Dakshineswar, brought her to her house every Tuesday[2] and worshipped her holy feet with the sixteen articles.

9. Sambhu Babu built a room for the Holy Mother. Captain helped. The Master passed one night in that room

The Holy Mother came to Dakshineswar for the second time probably in the middle of 1874. She lived now as before with the Master's mother at the Nahavat. Knowing this and inferring that she was feeling it uncomfortable to live in that small room, Sambhu purchased for two hundred and fifty rupees a plot of land near the Dakshineswar temple, on which he wanted to build a spacious thatched room for her. Captain Viswanath Upadhyaya, an officer of the Nepal Government, was then paying visits to the Master and had become greatly devoted to him. Knowing the resolve of Sambhu to have the room built, Captain Viswanath readily came forward with the offer of supplying all the timber necessary for building it. For, the Sal wood

business of the Government of Nepal was then in his hands and, therefore, it was not very expensive for him to supply it. When the work of building the room began, Viswanath sent three big pieces of Sal wood from his stock at the village of Belur across the Ganga. But, as there was a strong flood tide in the river at night, one piece was carried away. Hriday became annoyed at it and went the length of calling the Holy Mother "unfortunate". Hearing, however, that one piece was carried away, the Captain sent another and the building was completed. The Holy Mother lived in that room for about a year. A woman was then appointed to be with the Holy Mother and to help her in the household work. The Holy Mother cooked food there, brought it daily to the Master at the Dakshineswar temple and came back after the Master had taken it. The Master also used to come to that room to meet her, some time during the day, be with her for a short period and returned to the temple. There was an exception to this routine only on one occasion. As soon as the Master came one afternoon there, it went on pouring so heavily and continuously till it was very late at night so that it was impossible for him to come back to the temple that night. He was, therefore, compelled to pass the night there. The Holy Mother cooked for him soup and rice; the Master partook of them and passed the night there.

10. The Holy Mother fell seriously ill while she was living in that room, and went to Jayramvati

The Holy Mother had a severe attack of dysentery when she had lived in that room for a year. Sambhu Babu took much care to get her cured. He called Dr. Prasad and she was placed under his treatment. During her convalescence, she was sent to her native village Jayramvati probably in 1876. Hardly had she reached the village when there was a relapse of the disease and she was again bed-ridden. It increased so much gradually that everyone doubted whether she would recover. Ramchandra, the revered father of the Holy Mother, had passed away by then. So, her mother and brothers served her as much as they could. Hearing of her severe illness the Master, we were told, said to Hriday, "So, Hriday, her coming into .the world and leaving it will be in vain, and nothing of the purpose for which

the human body is assumed viz., the attainment of God, will have been achieved!"

11. The Holy Mother undertook Prayopavesana in Simhavahini's temple and got the medicine

Seeing that the disease was not alleviated by any means, the Holy Mother had the idea of undertaking Prayopavesana (fasting unto death), before the Devi. Thinking that her mother and brothers might stand in her way if they knew it she went without their knowledge to Simhavahini's temple in the village and undertook Prayopavesana there. Scarcely had she been there in that condition for a few hours, when the Devi was pleased and prescribed the medicine for her recovery.

No sooner had she taken the medicine according to the bidding of the Devi than she came round and became strong as before. Since the Holy Mother undertook Prayopavesana and got the medicine, the Devi has become well known in the surrounding villages, as one especially "awakened."[1]

12. The fearless behaviour of Sambhu Babu at the time of his death

Sambhu served the Master and the Holy Mother for about four years, when he was laid up in his sick-bed. One day the Master went to see Sambhu during his illness and said when he returned, "There is no oil in Sambhu's lamp." The words of the Master came true and Sambhu died soon after, of diabetes with complications. Sambhu Babu was very liberal and he was an intrepid devotee of God. The cheerfulness of his mind was not impaired even for a single day during his illness. With a cheerful heart did he say to Hriday a few days before he passed away, "I have no anxiety about death; I have packed up all my bag and baggage and am quite ready to depart." Long before he was acquainted with Sambhu Babu, the Master, while in ecstasy, saw that the Mother of the universe had appointed Sambhu his second supplier of necessaries, and he recognized him at the first sight as such.

13. The last days of Chandramani, the Master's mother, and her death

There happened an important event in the Master's life after the Holy Mother had gone to her father's house during her illness. The Master's mother Chandramani Devi passed away in her eighty-fifth year on his birthday in 1876. On account of dotage the powers of her mind and sense were impaired to a great extent for a few years before her death. We record here the description of her death as it was given to us by Hriday.

Hriday was about to go home on leave, four days before she died. His mind became restless on account of an unknown fear before he started, and he could by no means bring himself to leave the Master alone and go. Hriday apprised the Master of his apprehension, when the latter said, "Then you need not go." Three days passed safely.

The Master used to go to his mother everyday for some time and serve her with his own hands. Hriday also used to serve her, and Kali's mother, a woman servant, remained for almost the whole of the day-time with the old lady. She was not now well disposed towards Hriday, For, in her dotage she had a notion from the time of Akshay's death that it was Hriday who had killed him and that he was trying to kill the Master and his wife. This was why she sometimes warned the Master and said, "Never comply with what Hriday says." Signs of her loss of understanding through age and infirmity were found in various other respects too. Take for example the following fact. The Alambazar jute mill was situated near the Dakshineswar garden. The workers of the mill were given leave for some time during midday. They were again called to work half an hour later by the sounding of a whistle. The old lady came to the conclusion that the sound of the whistle of the mill was that of the blowing of conchs in Vaikuntha. Therefore she would not sit to take her food till that whistle was sounded. Requested to take food, she would say, "How can I eat just now? Food has not yet been offered to LakshmiNarayana. The conch in Vaikuntha has not yet been blown. Should one take one's food before that?" It was difficult to make her sit to take her food on mill holidays on which the whistle was not sounded. Hriday and the Master had to invent various means to make her take her food.

The fourth day came; she showed no signs of illness. The Master went to her after dark and filled her mind with joy by leading the conversation on to his early life and telling her accounts about it. She was sent to bed at midnight, when the Master returned to his room.

It was morning the next day. The clock struck eight. But the old lady did not open the door and come out. Kali's mother went up to the door of the room on the first floor of the Nahavat and called her repeatedly, but got no reply. She put her ears to the door and heard an unnatural sound coming out of the old lady's throat. She became alarmed and informed the Master and Hriday about it. Hriday went, opened skilfully the bar of the door from outside and found that she was lying unconscious. He then brought Ayurvedic medicine and placed it on her tongue. He also began to make her drink milk and Ganga-water drop by drop at short intervals. She continued in that condition for three days. Then came the last moments. She was taken to the sacred Ganga. The Master offered at her lotus feet flowers, sandal-paste and leaves of the holy basil. As it was forbidden for the Master, a Sannyasin, to per form the obsequies of his mother, his brother's son Ramlal was deputed by him to perform her funeral rites. When the period of defilement was over, Ramlal, at the request of the Master, set free a bull and performed the Sraddha ceremony according to the prescription of the scriptures.

14. The Master went to perform Tarpana at his mother's death, but could not do it. He was in a state in which actions drop off naturally

Paying regard to the prestige and honour of Sannyasa and to the scriptural injunctions connected with it, the Master did not observe Asaucha or perform any other rites at the death of his mother. Feeling that he had not performed any action proper for a son, one day he was about to offer Tarpana. But no sooner did he take up an Anjali of water than a state of spiritual inspiration came on him; his fingers became insensible and separated from one another and all the water fell between the fingers, in spite of his repeated efforts to perform the rite. Then with a heart laden with sorrow he sorely pleaded to his deceased mother his utter incapacity to do it. He was told afterwards by a Pandit that this state comes to a man who

has reached the state when actions drop off. With his progress in spirituality he reaches a state when performance of all Vedic actions is naturally rendered impossible and he incurs no sin on that account.

15. The Master went to see Kesav Babu

An important event took place in the Master's life by the will of the divine Mother a year before 'his mother passed away. In 1875 there arose a desire in the Master's mind to meet Kesavchandra Sen, the leader of the Brahmo Samaj of India. While the Master was in ecstasy, he received the direction of the Universal Mother in this matter, and knowing that Kesav with his disciples was then engaged in spiritual practices at Jaygopal Sen's garden house in Belgharia, a few miles to the north of Calcutta, he went there with Hriday (from whom we have this information) in Captain Viswanath's carriage and reached there at about 1 p.m. The Master wore that day a piece of red-bordered cloth. The lower extremity of its front, tucked in folds, was thrown up over his left shoulder and it was swinging behind his back.

16. Kesav in the garden at Belgharia

Hriday got down from the carriage and saw Kesav and his followers sitting on the Ghat of the garden pond. Coming up to him, he informed Kesav, "My maternal uncle is a great lover of God and likes to hear talks and songs on Hari. Listening to them, he gets inspired and enters into ecstasy. He has heard that you are a great devotee of God and has come here to listen to the talks on divine glory from you. If you kindly agree, I shall bring him here." Kesav gave his assent. Hriday helped the Master in alighting from the carriage and accompanied him. Kesav and others were till then very anxious to see him, but, when they saw him, their eagerness cooled down and he was taken to be an ordinary man.

17. His first talk with Kesav

The Master came to Kesav and said, “Is it true, gentlemen, that you all have the vision of God? I have a desire to know the nature of that vision. That is why I have come to you.” In that way the topic of God was taken up. We cannot say what Kesav said in answer to the Master’s words. But the Master, we were told by Hriday, sang the famous song of Ramprasad, “Who knows, O mind, how Kali is; She cannot be seen by the study of the six Darsanas” and immediately entered into Samadhi. When they saw that state of ecstasy of the Master, Kesav and others did not regard it as a high spiritual state. They thought that it was mere feigning or was due to a derangement of the brain. With a view to bringing him back to normal consciousness, Hriday now began uttering the Pranava into his ears. At this his face brightened up with a sweet smile. Thus regaining partial consciousness, the Master now went on explaining profound spiritual matters in so simple a language with the help of common examples that all were charmed and sat looking steadfastly at his face. Nobody noticed that the time for bath and meal was long past and imperceptibly the hour for the next prayer was almost come. Seeing that mood of theirs, the Master said, “If any other animal comes to a herd of cattle, they go forward to gore it; but, if a cow comes they lick its body and it is theirs. Our case is just the same today.” He then addressed Kesav and said, “Your tail has dropped off.” Unable to understand its meaning, the followers of Kesav looked annoyed, when the Master charmed them all by explaining its significance to them. “Look here,” said he, “as long as the tadpole has its tail, it lives only in water and cannot come up on land; but, when the tail drops off, it can live on land as well as in water. Even so, as long as a man has the tail of ignorance, he can live in the water of the world only, but when that tail falls off, he can as freely move about in the world as in Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. Your mind, O Kesav, has now attained that state in which you can live in the world as also in Existence-Knowledge-Bliss.” The Master spent a long time discussing various topics like this and came back to Dakshineswar that day.

18. The intimate relation between the Master and Kesav

Kesav's mind was so much attracted towards the Master since he saw him first that, from now on till his passing away, he deemed it an honour and a privilege to meet him and enjoy his divine company very often. He would either come himself to the Dakshineswar temple or take the Master now and then to his "Kamal Kutir" residence at Calcutta. The relation between the Master and Kesav deepened so much that both of them felt a great want if they did not see each other even for a few days. At such times the Master used to go to Kesav in Calcutta or the latter would come to the former at Dakshineswar. Besides, Kesav considered it to be a part of the annual festival of the Brahmo Samaj to come with his companions to the Master or take him to them and spend a day with him in divine conversations. Many were the occasions when he with his followers came to Dakshineswar in a steamer singing the glory of God, had the Master brought up into it and took a trip on the Ganga, all the while listening to his ambrosial teaching.

19. How Kesav behaved at Dakshineswar

Remembering the scriptural injunctions, Kesav never came empty-handed to Dakshineswar. Whenever he came, he brought with him some fruits and placed them before the Master and like a devoted follower sat at his feet and conversed with him. At one time the Master said to him by way of a joke, "Kesav, you charm so many people by your lectures; say something to me!" Kesav replied humbly, "Sir, am I to come to a blacksmith's shop to sell needles? (i.e., am I to carry coal to Newcastle?) Please say something yourself and let me listen. People are charmed as soon as I tell them a few words of yours.''

20. The Master explained to Kesav: "Brahman and Its power are one and the same. The three, divine word, devotee, and divine Lord are One, and the One is the three."

One day the Master explained to Kesav at Dakshineswar that if one accepted the existence of Brahman, one had similarly to accept the existence of the power of Brahman and that Brahman and Its power were

eternally one and the same. Kesav accepted it. The Master then told him that, like Brahman and Its power, the three entities, namely, the divine words (the scriptures), the devotee, and the divine Lord are non-separate; in other words, eternally identical. The three, namely, the scriptures, the devotee and the divine Lord are One, and the One is the three. Kesav understood and accepted this too. The Master went on to say that the three, namely, the Guru, Krishna (the divine Lord), and the devotee are One and One is the three, which he was then going to explain to him. Kesav mused a little—we do not know what thoughts passed through his mind—and said with humility, "Sir, I cannot accept now more than what you have said already. It is, therefore, needless to raise this topic at present." The Master said, "That's all right. Let us stop here." The mind of Kesav which had been inspired with the Western ideas and ideals, had thus received much light from the divine company of the Master and, understanding day after day the mystery of the Vedic religion, plunged in Sadhana. This is evident to us because his religious opinion gradually underwent a change as he came into close contact with the Master.

21. The Coochbehar marriage took place in 1878. Wounded by its repercussion Kesav attained spiritual depth. The Master's opinion on the marriage

The human mind, unless grievously wounded, does not feel like detaching itself from the world and realizing God as its all. Kesav got a shock when he gave away his daughter in marriage to the prince of Coochbehar about three years after he had become acquainted with the Master. This marriage produced a great commotion in the Brahmo Samaj of India, and split it in two. The party opposed to Kesav separated themselves from the society and formed a new one called the General Brahmo Samaj. The Master at Dakshineswar was much shocked to hear of that quarrel between the two parties over a petty matter. Hearing of the rule of the Brahmo Samaj about the marriageable age of girls, the Master said, "Birth, death and marriage are things entirely under the will of God. They cannot be brought under hard and fast rules. Why did Kesav set about to fix that?" If any one raised the topic of the Coochbehar marriage and condemned

Kesav in the presence of the Master, he used to say, “How is Kesav to blame for doing that? He is a man with a family. Why should he not do what is good for his sons and daughters? What is there to be condemned when a man having the responsibility of a family on his shoulders does this without deviating from the path of virtue? Kesav in no way acted contrary to religion or morality. He has, rather, discharged the duty of a father.” Viewing it thus from the standpoint of the duties of a householder the Master always supported Kesav’s action as not in any way blameworthy. However, there is no doubt that this blow dealt by the incident of the Coochbehar marriage turned Kesav’s mind more inward and led it more rapidly along the path of spirituality.

22. Kesav could not fully grasp the ideas and ideals of the Master. He honoured the Master but could not accept the ideal1. We heard it from Vijaykrishna Goswami.

Although he was dearly loved by the Master and had many opportunities to see and hear him, it is doubtful whether Kesav, inspired with Western ideas and ideals as he was, understood him perfectly. For, on the one hand, he looked upon the Master as a living embodiment of spirituality—he personally took him to his house, showed him round the places where he went to bed, where he ate, where he sat and where he reflected on the good of his Samaj, asked him to bless him so that his mind might not forget God and think of worldly objects in any one of these places and, taking him to the place where he meditated on God, offered flowers at his lotus feet.[1] When he came to Dakshi-neswar, he was seen by many of us to salute the Master uttering “Victory to the (New) Dispensation.”

23. The New Dispensation and the Master’s opinion

On the other hand, he was unable to accept fully the Master’s saying, “All religions are true—as many faiths, so many paths,” and he tried to found a new faith called “The New Dispensation” by picking out what appeared to him to be the essentials of all religions and rejecting what seemed non-essentials in them. As this faith came into existence shortly

after Kesav's acquaintance with the Master, it is probable that it was a partial acceptance and propagation of the Master's final conclusion regarding the true nature of all religions.

24. The intricate national problem of India has been solved by the Master alone

When the powerful waves of Western education and civilization came to India and began to bring about a radical change in the attitude towards ancient knowledge of Brahman and the manners and customs of society, every talented man of this country tried to find out a harmony between the culture and civilization of the East and those of the West. Just as in the province of Bengal, Rammohan Roy, Maharshi Devendranath, Brahmananda Kesav and others sacrificed their lives for that purpose, even so, in other parts of the country many great souls are known to have appeared and carried on the same work; but none of them could perfectly tackle it before the advent of the Master. The Master duly performed the disciplines of all the religions of India in his own life and, getting the proper result in each of them, showed that the religion of this country was not the cause of its degradation and that that cause must be sought elsewhere. He showed also that society, manners, customs, in short, the culture and civilization of India had, as their basis, religion, which had brought glory and prosperity to this country in the past,— that the same life-giving religion still exists in full; and that we could again successfully pilot our national ship, if only we could base all our efforts and endeavours on religion and on nothing else. Living the ideal life himself, the Master showed further how religion could broaden the outlook of man. Next he transmitted the liberalizing power of that religion to his disciples—especially to Swami Vivekananda—who were till then inspired by Western ideas and ideals, taught them how to perform all actions in the world as ancillary to religion; and thus gave a wonderful solution for the above-mentioned intricate problem of India. Just as by his gaining of the ultimate results of all the faiths of the world through their respective practices he has pointed out how to remove all differences in the spiritual realm all over the world, even so, by being perfect in all the faiths of India through their

orthodox methods, he has silenced all wranglings about the religions of the land and has shown us on what basis our nationality has all along stood and shall stand.

25. The Master's reaction to Kesav's death

Even though Kesav failed to understand the full implication of the Master's ideals, the Master had a wonderful love for him which we could understand from his reaction to Kesav's death in 1884. The Master said, "I could not leave my bed for three days when I got that news; it seemed as if a limb of mine was paralysed."

26. The Master sew Gauranga in Sankirtan

We shall bring this appendix to a close by mentioning another event which happened when he met Kesav for the first time. The Master then had a desire to witness the all-bewitching peripatetic Sankirtan of Sri Chaitanya. The divine Mother fulfilled that desire of his by showing it to him in the way described below: Standing outside his room, he saw wonderful waves of Sankirtan coming towards him from the direction of the Panchavati, proceeding towards the main gate of the Dakshineswar garden and disappearing behind the tree. He witnessed that, absorbed in the love of God, Gauranga, the moon of Navadwip, was proceeding with a slow gait in the centre with Nityananda and Advaita on either side, surrounded by a dense multitude. They were all in a state of spiritual inebriation produced by God-love, some expressing the bliss of their hearts by losing control over themselves and others by wild ecstatic dances. The crowd was so great that it looked as if there was no end to the number of people there. A few faces in that wonderful Sankirtan got impressed on the canvas of the Master's memory in bright colours. When he saw them coming as his devotees shortly after he had had that vision, the Master arrived at the certain conclusion that they had been the companions of Chaitanya in their previous lives.

Shortly after he had had that vision, the Master went to Kamarpukur and to Hriday's native village, Sihar. Phului-Shyambazar is situated a few miles

away from the latter place. Hearing that there were many Vaishnavas there who filled the place with the bliss of Sankirtan everyday, he had a desire to go there and listen to it. The village of Belte stood near Shyambazar. Natavar Goswami of that village had met the Master before, and invited him to sanctify his home with the dust of his feet. Accompanied by Hriday, the Master went to his house, lived there for seven days and enjoyed the bliss of Sankirtan with the Vaishnavas of Shyambazar. Being acquainted with the Master, Isanchandra Mallick of that place invited him with great respect to his house to share the bliss of Sankirtan there. The Vaishnavas were much attracted towards him to see his wonderful moods during Sankirtan. The news of his wonderful moods spread all around—not only in Shyambazar but also to Ramjivanpur, Krishnaganj and other villages far and near. Then came from those villages parties of Sankirtan with a view to enjoying divine bliss with him. That made the village very much crowded and Sankirtan went on night and day. There was then the general talk that there had come a devotee of God who died and revived many times a day. People forgot food and sleep and, anxious to see him, climbed up trees and got on the roofs of houses. Thus, for three days and nights, there flowed a tide of celestial bliss there. People became mad, as it were, to see the Master and to touch his feet. And the Master had no time to take his bath or meal. Hriday afterwards fled secretly with him to Sihar, when that "mart of joy" came to an end. Isan Choudhuri, Natavar Goswami, Isan Mallick, Srinath Mallick and others of the village of Shyambazar and their descendants mention that event even today and cherish great love and respect for him. The Master also became acquainted with Raicharan Das, the famous Khol (drum) player of Krishnaganj. As soon as he played on the Khol, the Master would go into ecstasy. We were told of the above-mentioned event partly by the Master and partly by Hriday. We have been able to ascertain its date in the following way:

A great devotee of the Master, Mahendranath Pal, the physician of Alambazar, met the Master after Kesav Babu had had the privilege of meeting him in 1875. He said to us that the Master had returned only a short time before from Sihar when he went to see him for the first time. That day the Master told him of the aforesaid happening at Phului-Shyambazar.

Swami Yogananda's house was situated within a short distance of the Dakshineswar temple. So, leaving aside his case, we may note that the chosen devotees of the Master started coming to him from 1879. Swami Vivekananda came to him in 1881 and Jagadamba Dasi also died in 1881. Hriday foolishly worshipped during this time the feet of Mathur Babu's grand-daughter of very tender age, about six months afterwards. Her father apprehending that evil might befall the child, became much annoyed and dismissed Hriday from the service of the Kali temple. So the event under discussion must have taken place some time in or before 1879.

Here ends the Sadhakabhava.

Footnote

1. Swami Premananda.

1. Some of the Master's devotees say that they heard him mention the fact that after the death of Mathur Babu, Manimohan Sen of Panihati took upon himself the loving duty of supplying all the Master's necessaries. Manimohan then had much respect for the Master and used to visit him very often. Sambhu took on that duty after Manimohan. But, Sambhu, the Master himself pointed out, was the second supplier of his necessaries. So Mani Babu, it seems to us, did not continue to serve him long even though he had started to execute that self-imposed charge.

2. Tuesday is regarded auspicious for the worship of the Devi.—Tr.

1. i.e., living and communing with men and doing good to them.—Tr.

1. We heard it from Vijaykrishna Goswami.

PART THREE

SRI RAMAKRISHNA
THE GREAT MASTER

AS THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER (I)

PREFACE
"AS THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER"

This is the Third Part of *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master.* The events of the Master's life from the time he completed his Sadhanas to the time he became well known to the public have been in the main recorded here. We have not merely recorded the events and activities of the Master at that time, but have also discussed, as far as possible, the moods that prompted and the purpose that guided those actions. For, the history of the life of a man, who is an aggregate of body and mind, cannot be had only from a detailed study of his insentient body and its activities. When writing a biography or a history, the materialistic West exhibits its ability mainly in recording events, while the spiritualistic Hindu applies his mind to a careful depiction of the mental functions only. It is our conviction that a true biography or history should be a combination of both and that the actions of the unconscious body should be recorded with a view to unfolding the history of the mind.

Moreover, we have discussed the extraordinary life of Sri Ramakrishna in the light of the scriptures in many places. We have been led to study the unique functioning of his mind, his experiences and activities in comparison with those of great souls like Krishna, Buddha, Sankara and Chaitanya of India and Jesus and others of other countries. The Master said to us in unambiguous language again and again that "the one who, in the past, became Rama and Krishna is (showing his own body) in this sheath now" and that "the spiritual experiences of this (meaning himself) have gone beyond those recorded in the Vedas and Vedantas." As a matter of fact, in discussing impartially, as far as possible, the life of Sri Ramakrishna established in Bhavamukha, we have been constrained to confess that such an uncommon life in the spiritual world was never seen before.

Again, when we discuss the full implication of the new truth, viz., "As many faiths, so many paths", discovered and proclaimed by him for the benefit of mankind when he reached perfection in a remarkably short time in all the spiritual practices according to the faiths preached by previous incarnations, we are inevitably led to accept him as the summation and consummation of all the incarnations who have gone before. The more we have discussed the unprecedented holy life of Sri Ramakrishna, the greater has grown our conviction that he is the unique product of the universal and eternal spiritual ideas of the Vedas—the totality of their essence. When the revered Swami Vivekananda had preached Sri Ramakrishna's ideas and the public became eager to know the facts of his life, many people published many accounts of him. But none of them pointed out clearly the hidden relation that existed between that unique life and the Vedic or eternal religion. Consequently, from a study of these books an impression has grown in the mind of people that Sri Ramakrishna was a man cut off from the tradition of the eternal Hindu religion and has left behind him a particular sectarian doctrine of his creation. Further, many of those stories contain errors regarding the life-history of the Master and lack appreciation of the real import of the events of his life and their relation with events before and after. In order to meet to a certain extent that demand of the public, we have, following in the footsteps of Swami Vivekananda, attempted in this book a description of that great, noble life as it presented itself to us and a little of that state of being, the realization of a particle of which has made Swami Vivekananda and others, including ourselves, dedicate their lives at the lotus feet of the Master. Let the reader know that if even a small part of the noble ideal of the Master's life, unintelligible to ordinary man, has been correctly portrayed in this book, it is due to his greatness; and whatever defect or incompleteness has remained in it is due to our lack of proper understanding and expression. We intend to present to the reader a description of the first and last part of the precious life of the Master later.[1] Before we start, we intend to prefix the verses and the aphoristic article by Swami Vivekananda who has discussed therein the hidden relation of the eternal Vedic religion with the unfathomable life of Sri Ramakrishna abiding in Bhavamukha.

AUTHOR

Footnote

1. In writing this biography the author began by writing this part first. Then he wrote in succession parts IV, II, I and V,—Tr.

THE HINDU RELIGION AND SRI RAMAKRISHNA

The One born as Rama of incomparable greatness in all the three worlds, the very life of Janaka's daughter; who, though himself beyond the world lo, did not give up doing good to it; the current of whose love flowed ever unchecked down even to a Chandala; and whose body of supreme knowledge was enveloped by devotion in the form of Sita; the One born as Krishna, who sang the song (the Gita) sweet and tranquil, yet deep as the roar of a lion, suppressing the great cataclysmic tumult raised in the battlefield and destroying the innate profound darkness of ignorance— that ever-renowned divine personality is now born as Ramakrishna.[1]

The word Sastra denotes the beginningless and endless "Veda". It is this Veda only that is capable of teaching religion.

The Puranas and other books are denoted by the word Smriti. They have authority only so far as they have followed the Veda.

"Truth" is of two kinds: (1) that which is perceivable by the five senses of human beings and is deducible therefrom by inference and (2) that which is perceivable by the subtle powers arising from Yoga.

The knowledge acquired by the first means is called science and that acquired by the second method is the Veda.

The beginningless and endless mass of infinite knowledge called the "Veda" is eternally existent. The Creator Himself is creating, maintaining and destroying this world with its help.

The person in whom that power of intuition is manifested is called a Rishi and the infinite knowledge that he comprehends through that power is called the "Veda".

The attainment of this Rishi-hood, the seer-ship, of the immediate knowledge of the "Veda" is the true realization of religion. Until the

aspirant's life opens out to it, religion for him is a "mere meaningless word" and he cannot be said to have set his foot on the threshold of religion.

The authority of the Veda holds good irrespective of time, place and person; that is, its authority is not confined to a particular time, country or person.

The Veda alone sets forth the universal religion. Although a little of that infinite knowledge is to be found in the Itihasas, Puranas, etc., of our country and in the religious books of foreign countries, yet as the first complete and unaltered collection of the entire body of the eternal knowledge, the mass of words compiled into four books called the Veda, well known to the Aryans, is worthy of occupying the highest place in all respects, of being adored by the whole world and of being the ultimate proof of the truth of all scriptures, indigenous or alien.

Regarding the mass of words called the Veda, discovered by the Aryans, it must also be understood that that part alone of it which is not Arthavada[1] (eulogy) or Aitihya[2](tradition) or otherwise empirically known or knowable is the Veda. This mass of words is divided into two parts, namely, that relating to knowledge and that relating to work. As the rituals of the Veda and their results described in the "work" portion exist for all time in the domain of Maya, they are subject to transformation according to the law of change with reference to time, place, person, circumstances, etc. Yes, they have been and will be changed. As social manners and customs depend on this "work" portion, they also do and will undergo change. Similarly, popular customs and manners too have been and will be accepted from time to time, only so far as they are not contrary to the scriptures and the conduct of the wise. One of the main causes of the downfall of the Aryans is their subjection to such popular customs and manners as are contrary to the Veda, to the conduct of the wise and to the scriptures conformable to the Veda.

The "knowledge" portion of the Veda, otherwise known as the Vedanta, — aided by selfless action, concentration of mind, devotion and self-knowledge — is eternally taking people across the ocean of Maya to the other shore of liberation. As it is not at all influenced by time, place and agency, it alone is the teacher of the universal religion—a religion that is meant for all peoples, all countries and all times.

It is on the basis of the "work" portion of the Veda that books on the social system by Manu and others have taught, in addition to other matters, those actions that are conducive to social- welfare, varying with time, place and agency; while books like the Puranas have taken up the truths hidden in the Vedanta and have explained them in detail by way of describing the great characters of the divine incarnations and others who are embodiments of one or other of the innumerable aspects of the Divinity, which these books try to emphasize.

But, in course of time, the descendants of the Aryans deviated from right conduct and, lacking dispassion, devoted themselves to the prevailing popular customs and grew feeble in intellect. They failed to understand the import of even the Puranas, which appeared as contradictory to one another on account of their teaching those different divine aspects and preaching the subtle truths of the Vedanta in gross and concrete forms in detail, for the consumption of weak brains. Hence they split into numerous divisions the integral eternal religion, which is an aggregate of innumerable religious moods; and kindling the fire of sectarian hatred and jealousy, endeavoured to throw one another into that fire. When they thus turned Bharata, the land of religion, almost into a hell, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna incarnated himself in order to show what the real religion of the Aryans was and where lay the unity amongst the numberless sects and denominations of the Hindu religion, scattered pellmell over a vast range of time and place— the religion that has become a source of delusion to the people of the land and an object of hatred to those of other countries, owing to its apparent division into innumerable ever-warring sects bristling with contradictory customs. This he did by holding aloft before the gaze of all his own life as a living example of that religion eternal, by concentrating in himself its universality, lost by the lapse of time.

The Divine, whose embodiment the Veda is, almost wholly neglected literary education in this incarnation, in order to show how the eternally existing Sastra—with the help of which Isvara evolves, maintains and dissolves the universe—reveals itself in the heart of a Rishi wherefrom all Samskaras have been erased; so that, when the truth of the Sastras is thus proved, religion would be rediscovered and re-promulgated.

It is well known from such books as the Smritis[1] that the Divine incarnates Himself again and again for the protection of the Veda, the true religion, and of Brahmana, the teacher of religion.

Even as a stream falling down a precipice gains in speed, and a wave rising after a fall swells higher, so after each downfall the Aryan society, shedding its morbidities, it is well known in history, emerges more glorious and vigorous under the compassionate guidance of the Divine.

Rising again after each fall, our society reveals more of the eternal perfection hidden within and the Divine, the internal controller of all beings, likewise manifests more and more His real nature in successive incarnations.

Again and again did this land of Bharata faint away and again and again did its divine Lord manifest Himself and re-awaken it.

But in the past no new-moon night of sorrow veiled this holy land with such a profound darkness as the present one, though the night is all but gone, being now at the fag end of its last quarter. However, the last fall of the country has been, as it were, to the bottom of the ocean, whereas, by comparison, all previous falls have been but the hoof-marks of a cow.

Therefore, compared with the splendour of this present awakening of the Aryan society, previous awakenings will appear as lacking in lustre like stars before the effulgence of the sun. And compared with the great vigour of this re-awakening similar occurrences of the past will appear as child's play.

On account of the lack of fit persons to prevent the calamity, the fragments of the various aspects of the eternal religion lay scattered in all directions during the present downfall, in the forms of petty sects. It was partially preserved in some places and utterly lost in others.

The most compassionate divine Lord has manifested Himself far more fully in this modern age, in the aforesaid form of the incarnation of the age, than He ever assumed in any other age, playing as He has done on the entire gamut of all the spiritual moods and experiences and utilizing to the utmost all arts and sciences.

In consequence of this fact, during this renascence, the descendants of Manu, invigorated by this new strength, will be able not only to piece

together the fragmented and scattered mass of spiritual knowledge, but also to re-discover the lost branches of arts and sciences, and to enrich their lives by the realization of those ideas and ideals through proper understanding.

Hence is being preached the harmony of all noble ideas and ideals at the dawn of this great age. And this infinite and eternal grand ideal that lay embedded and hidden in the ancient scripture and religion of India is being loudly proclaimed in society.

This new faith of the age is the fruitful source of all blessings to the world, especially to India (Bharata); and Sri Bhagavan Ramakrishna, the founder of this new religion of the age, is the reformed manifestation of the ancient holy founders of the religions of the past. Have faith in it, O man, grasp it!

O man, a dead person never returns; a past night does not come back; an emotion, however passionate, never takes the same form over again; a Jiva, likewise, does not assume the same body twice. We, therefore, call you back from the worship of the past to that of the palpable present, from the useless expenditure of energy on regrets for the bygone to the grand endeavour of the living present; from the waste of energy in recovering lost pathways to the broad new-laid neighbouring highways. Wise one, take the hint!

Imagine and feel the fully developed state of the power, the mere opening sound of which is reverberating in all the quarters to the very skies; give up all vain doubt, weakness, jealousy and malice common amongst a slave-race and help in the work of turning forward the wheel of this great age. We are the servants of the divine Lord, His children, His playmates, assisting Him in His play. Have this faith firmly implanted in your heart and come up to the field of action.

VIVEKANANDA

Footnote

1. The above is a translation of two Sanskrit stanzas composed by Swami Vivekananda.—Tr.

1. Vide Glossary.—Tr.

2. Vide Glossary.—Tr.

1. Books dealing with rules and regulations, governing society and religion. —Tr.

CHAPTER I
SRI RAMAKRISHNA IN BHAVAMUKHA

The mental states derived from Sattva, those from Rajas and those from Tamas verily proceed from Me. But I am not in them; they are in Me. Deluded by these three states, the modifications of the Gunas, all this world is ignorant of Me, who am beyond them and changeless.

—Gita VII. 12. & 13.

1. Deep meaning of the Master's words

Many have now come to know that at the end of the extraordinary austerity practised continually for twelve years, the Master was bidden by the Mother of the universe to "Remain in Bhavamukha", which command he obeyed. But it is very difficult to understand and explain what it is to remain in Bhavamukha and how deep its meaning is. Twenty-eight years ago Swami Vivekananda once said to a friend,[1]"Basketfuls of philosophical books can be written on each single sentence spoken by the Master." The friend was surprised to hear it and said, "Is that so? We, however, do not find so deep a meaning in his words. Will you please explain to me any of his utterances in that manner?"

The Swami: "You would have understood it, had you the brains! Take any saying of the Master and I will explain."

Friend: "All right, please explain the story of the elephant-god and the mahout-god related by the Master to illustrate his instruction on seeing God in all beings."

The Swami at once took up the controversy over the doctrines of free will and of pre-destination or personal effort and God's will, raging perpetually among the scholars of both the East and the West without their approaching any conclusion, and continued for three days to explain to the friend, in

simple language, that this story of the Master was a wonderful solution to that controversy.

2. Similar are the words of all incarnations of God

On reflection one is amazed to find such profundity of meaning in the ordinary daily conduct of the Master and in his teachings. This is true of every one of the incarnations of God. One has to study their lives to be convinced of this truth. Leaving aside the instances of one or two great souls like Sankaracharya, who had to re-establish religion by tearing to shreds the whole fabric of the opponents' perverse arguments, we find in the lives of other great souls that they said and explained, in simple language and in short parables touching the heart and in homely similes and allegories, the truths they had to teach. They kept themselves at a safe distance from grandiloquent bombast or elaborate rhetoric. But their simple words and plain similes have so much meaning and power in them for elevating ordinary people to high ideals, that even now we have not become able to comprehend their meanings in full or find a limit to their power, though we have been attempting to do so for thousands of years. The more we study them the more do we find deeper and deeper meanings; and the more we muse over them, the more does the mind renounce the transient, inauspicious realm of the world and ascend to higher and higher regions. And the farther one proceeds towards "the realiza-tion of the supreme goal", "the existence in Brahman", "liberation" or "the vision of God", as has been variously called by the great souls, the more does one comprehend in one's heart of hearts the deep significance of those simple words.

3. An example: Girish was asked to give the "power of attorney"

This is the law. We do not find any exception to the operation of this law in the Master's words and conduct. Oh, what a profound depth of content do the Master's words reveal and how little of it did they appear to possess at the first hearing! It is enough to give here one example. After meeting the master a few times, one day Girish offered himself completely to him and said, "What shall I do from now on?"

The Master: “Go on, be doing what you have been doing. Now keep to both sides, this (God) and that (the world). When one side (i.e., the world) drops off, whatever is ordained to happen will happen. But continue to remember and think of Him every morning and evening.” Saying this, he looked at Girish, as if waiting for a reply.

At this, Girish was sad and thought, “The nature of my work is such that I cannot keep regular time even for satisfying my daily physical needs such as eating, drinking, sleeping, etc. I am certain to fail to remember and think of God morning and evening. Oh, what a calamity! It will be very wrong to transgress Sri Guru’s words and evil will certainly befall me. So how can I agree? It is certainly wrong to fail to keep one’s promise to any person in this world, much more so a promise to a person whom one is going to accept as one’s guide for the next world.”

4. The mental state of Girish

Girish was hesitating even to express his thoughts. He continued to think that surely the Master had not asked him to do a very difficult task. Had he said this to anyone else, he would have at once agreed. But what could Girish do? As he knew correctly the state of his mind, which was full of outgoing tendencies, he found that it was, as it were, beyond his power to practise even that little of religious duties everyday. Again, looking at his own nature he found that he felt suffocated even to think that he was to submit himself to an obligation binding him for ever to a vow or a rule and that the mind would feel no peace till that vow or rule was broken. That was true all through his life. There was no difficulty in voluntarily doing anything good or bad but his mind rebelled at the thought that he was bound to do such and such a thing. Realizing his very weak and helpless condition, he felt distressed and kept silent. He could neither say he would do it, nor could he say he could not. How could he be so shameless as to say he could not do so easy a task? And even if he said so, what would the Master and others present there think? They would not perhaps realize his extremely helpless condition and would think, even though they might not express their thought, that it was a pretence.

Finding that Girish remained silent, the Master looked at him and, knowing his thoughts, said, “Very well, if you cannot do that, remember Him once before taking food and once before going to bed.”

Girish continued to be silent. He asked himself if he could do even that. He took his food at 10 a.m. on some days and at 5 p.m. on others, and there was the same irregularity about his night meals. There were days on which although he was taking his meal he was not at all conscious of the fact, on account of troubles and worries regarding the cases pending in the courts, such as that he had no information whether the fee sent by him to the barrister had reached him in time and how it would be a calamity indeed if he did not appear at the time when the case was to be taken up, and so on and so forth. If, however, such days repeated themselves—and this was not impossible—he would surely forget to remember and think of God on those occasions. Alas, the Master was asking him to do such an easy thing and yet he could not say that he would do it. Girish was in a very sorry plight and remained motion less and speechless; but there raged, as it were, a storm of anxiety, fear and despair in his heart. The Master looked at Girish again and said smilingly, “You will say, ‘I cannot do even that’; very well, then give me the power of attorney.[1]” The Master was then in a state of divine semi-consciousness.

5. The state of Girish’s mind after he gave the power of attorney

This was to Girish’s liking. His mind was now calm. And there swelled in his heart an infinite on-rush of love for and reliance on the Master for his infinite grace. He felt relieved that the bondage of rule, which was a terror to him, was now gone for ever. It was now sufficient to have the firm faith that whatever he might do, the Master would save him some way or other by his divine power.

6. Giving the power of attorney, a bondage of love

Giving the power of attorney to the Master meant then to Girish nothing more than this: that he would not have to give up anything by means of personal efforts or to bother about spiritual practices and that the Master

would remove the last vestige of worldliness from his mind through his own powers.

But he did not then realize that he had put voluntarily round his neck a noose of love a hundred times stronger than the bondage of rule which, he thought, was so unbearable. He did not then dive sufficiently deep, nor had he the power then to realize that whatever be the circumstances, good or bad, he might find himself in, whatever be the fame or infamy that might attend him, however agonizing be the pain or misery that dogged his steps, he had nothing more to say or do than to bear them all without a murmur. All other thoughts vanished from his mind and he was feeling the endless grace of Sri Ramakrishna—in fact, a new ego rooted in Sri Ramakrishna was born and was fast developing in him. A spirit of divine defiance of the world came upon him and he thought that whatever the world might speak of him, even if it despised him, it was quite immaterial; for, the Master was undoubtedly his in all circumstances and at all times. How could he then know that the constant feeling of this new egoism is regarded in devotional scriptures[1] as a kind of spiritual practice and comes to human beings, they say, from an abundance of good fortune. Girish, however, was now free from anxiety. And while eating, drinking or being engaged in any other activity, he had but one thought, viz., Sri Ramakrishna had taken upon himself all his responsibility, a soothing thought, a balm to his mind, which through its deepening impression was gradually gaining mastery over his whole being and involuntarily making him meditate on the Master, thus bringing about a revolution in him, in all his thoughts and actions. He was happy, though he did not understand all that. For, he thought, was it not a fact that he (Sri Ramakrishna) loved him and was more than his own?

7. How Girish was taugh thence-forward

The Master always taught that “nobody’s spiritual attitude of mind should be interfered with” and he used to act accordingly in his daily dealings with devotees. Knowing well Girish’s spiritual mood, he began to give instructions from then on in accordance with that mood. One day when Girish said in the presence of the Master, “I will do it” in respect of a trifling matter, the Master remonstrated suddenly Saying, “What is that?

Why do you thus say ‘I will do it’? Suppose you cannot do it. What then? You should say, ‘I shall do it if God so wills’.” Girish on his part felt, “This is quite right. I completely placed on God all my responsibility and He has accepted it. I can do a thing if only He thinks it proper and good for me and allows me to do so. How can I do it by my own power? “Realizing this, he gradually gave up such words and ideas as “I will do it”, “I will go”, and so on.

8. Girish understood the deep significance of giving the power of attorney

Thus days rolled on and at last the Master passed away. Girish met with various calamities, e.g., the death of his wife, son and others; but his mind began to assert every time, “He (Sri Ramakrishna) is allowing these events to happen, only because they are good for you. You have transferred your responsibility to him and he has accepted it; but he has given you no assurance regarding the path along which he will take you. Knowing that this path is easy for you, he is leading you along it. You have no reason to say ‘no’ or repine for it. Were they then empty words, that you gave him the power of attorney or transferred your responsibility to him?” Thus as more and more days passed, the hidden meaning of “giving the power of attorney” was more and more realized by Girish. Was its meaning completely understood even at last? Asked about it, Girish said, “Much remains to be understood even now. Did I know then that so much lay hidden in the simple giving of the power of attorney? I now find that at some time there is an end to the spiritual practices like Japa, austerities and devotional exercises, but there is no end to the work of a person who has given the power of attorney; for, he has to watch every step and every breath to know whether he does so depending on Him and His power or on this wretched ‘I’.”

9. It is the incarnations alone that can accept the power of attorney

Many thoughts occur to our mind in connection with accepting the power of attorney. We find in the history of the world that it is great souls alone,

such as Lord Jesus, Chaitanya and others, who sometimes gave assurance of this kind to some people. Ordinary teachers have no power to do so. They can at the most teach others the Mantras, particular ceremonial functions, etc., with the help of which they themselves made spiritual progress; or they can attract people towards purity by living pure lives themselves. But when paralysed by various kinds of worldly bondage man reaches the state of complete helplessness and, when asked to do even a trifling thing, he pleads his inability to do it and asks for help in utter despair, it is beyond the power of ordinary teachers to help him. It is beyond the power of any man to say to another that he would take upon himself all the responsibility for the latter's evil actions and that he himself would experience their results on the latter's behalf. It is when such a decline of spirituality is manifested in humanity that the Lord out of His grace incarnates Himself and suffers the results of man's evil actions on his behalf and saves him from the constraint of that bondage. Although He does so, He does not absolve him altogether, but makes him put forth some little effort, so that he may learn. The Master used to say in this connection, "Man finishes the experiences of ten lives in one by their (the incarnations') grace."

10. Examples

This is as true of an individual as of a nation. It is this which has been called in the *Gita* (XI. 8), "the attainment of the divine eye" by Arjuna for the purpose of having the vision of the universal form of Brahman; in the Puranas, "being blessed with the grace of God the Lord"; in the Bengal Vaishnava scriptures, "the saving of Jagai and Madhai or the crushing of the unbeliever in them"; and in Christian scriptures, "the vicarious atonement" of Jesus through taking upon himself the sufferings of others. We could never have realized that there is truth in all this, if we did not get an indication of it in the life of Sri Ramakrishna.

11. The Master's vision in connection with accepting the 'power of attorney'

When the Master came and lived at Shyampukur in Calcutta for treatment, one day he had a vision that his subtle body came out of his gross one and was walking up and down, Regarding the vision the Master said, “I saw that it had sores all over its back. I was wondering why they were there and Mother showed that it was because people came and touched my body after committing all kinds of sins; and because out of compassion for their sufferings, I had to take upon myself the results of their evil actions, I had all these sores. That is why this (showing his throat[1]) is there. Why, otherwise, should there be so much suffering, though this body never did any wrong?” We were dumb-founded and thought, “Is it a fact then that one can undergo the results of another’s actions and make the latter free to make spiritual progress?” Hearing the Master’s words, many thought, out of love for him, “Ah, why did we touch the Master after committing various evil acts like lying, cheating, etc.? He is suffering so much, undergoing so much pain, because of us. We will never again touch his divine body.”

12. The Master cured leucoderma

We remember in this connection what the Master said on another occasion. Once, a man suffering from leucoderma came and said importunately to the Master that if he would only pass his hand over it, he would be cured of the disease. The Master had compassion on him and said, “Well, I know nothing, but as you desire, I shall pass my hand. It will be cured if Mother wills.” And he passed his hand over it. For the whole of that day, the Master felt so much pain in his hand that he became restless and said to the Mother of the universe, “I will never do such a thing again, Mother.” The Master used to say later, “He was cured of the disease but the suffering was experienced (showing his body) here.” These events of the Master’s life clearly show us that in this age the scriptures like the Vedas, the Bible, the Puranas, the Koran, the treatises on rituals, the sacred formulae, etc., can be easily understood, if studied in the light of Sri Ramakrishna’s life. The Master also told us, “My children, coins current in the time of the Nawabs are not legal tender in that of the Badshas”.

13. It is not easy to give the “power of attorney”

On a superficial view it may appear that the giving of the power of attorney is a very easy affair, as if the power waits ready to be handed over to another. Man is a slave to his inclinations, he looks for advantages even while practising religion. He likes to keep both, worldly pleasures and the bliss of God. He considers worldly enjoyments to be so sweet, so nectareous, that he feels as if the ground is cut from under his feet at the mere idea of having to renounce them. For, he wonders, what will he then have for the support of his life? It is for this reason that he is beside himself with joy when he comes to know that in the spiritual world the power of attorney can be given. He thinks, "Well, how grand! Let me enjoy pleasures in the world to my heart's content and commit theft, cheating, robbery, etc., for that; and let Chaitanya, Jesus or Ramakrishna so arrange that I may be happy in the next world. I say the next world, because some day I have to die." He does not then see that it is nothing but a deception committed by his wily mind, that it is nothing but shutting his eyes to the terrible pictures of his own evil actions and going headlong to destruction; and that some day he will be forced to open his eyes to see before him a shoreless sea. He will then realize that no one has accepted the power of attorney given by a deceiver. Ah, man, how many are the ways in which you are deceiving yourself, thinking that you have struck a splendid bargain! And hail Mahamaya, what a great delusion hast Thou created in the human mind! What Ramprasad says in his song addressing Thee is indeed perfectly true:

"Hail, O Mother Dakshina Kali,
Thou hast produced delusion in the world.
But hast made the magic wand of both Thy feet,
That destroy delusion, fall to the lot of Siva.
Thou art the daughter of such a magician,
Thou hast kept the Father (of the universe) in the

disguise of madness,
And assuming the three Gunas,
Thou hast transformed Thyself

into Purusha and Prakriti.
I apprehend therefore, O Prasad,[1]
That you have become mad, as, you hope to get

Those Feet, which could not be attained
By the destroyer of Tripura himself."

14. The state in which the power of attorney can be given

The power of attorney cannot be given for the mere wish; man can rightly give it only when, as the result of much effort and perseverance, the mind realizes a state in which that is made possible. And it is only then that the divine Lord accepts it. Even when running after the various things of the world to become happy, man really feels that what he has attained is a shadow without reality; even when performing spiritual practices, Japa and austerities, he feels in his heart of hearts that it can never be an adequate price for the attainment of the infinite Lord; and even when employing unsparingly all means and methods with the hope and faith of moving mountains by the sheer force of perseverance, he realizes that he has no power to move a straw; it is only then that he begins to cry aloud in a plaintive voice, "O, Thou protector, whoever and wherever Thou art, save me," and it is then that the Lord accepts his power of attorney.

15. Beware of the deception of the mind

On the contrary, when the mind takes a perverse attitude and says "I do not find joy in performing spiritual exercises or calling on the Lord but I find happiness in giving free reins to my whims and fancies and hence I shall follow them" and when objection is taken to this attitude, it comes out with the prompt reply, "Why, have I not given my power of attorney to God? What shall I do when He is making me act thus? Why does he not change my mind? "then one should know that giving the power of attorney in this manner is to deceive oneself as well as others and to lose the here and the hereafter.

16. Another point of view

This subject will be better understood, if discussed from another standpoint. Well, let it be granted that you have given the power of attorney

and that you have no need to call on God or to adopt spiritual practices. If the “power of attorney” has been properly given, you cannot but constantly dwell upon His compassion in your heart of hearts. You will then feel that you fell into this shoreless sea of the world and have been for long helplessly struggling in it and that He has saved you by His grace. Just imagine how much gratitude, love and devotion of your heart you will pour on Him when you feel like that. Will it be necessary to ask you always to think of Him and remember His name? Filled with grateful love for Him, will not your heart naturally do so? Even a vicious creature like a snake feels grateful to the person who gives it shelter and it goes under the familiar name of a “house snake “and does not harm the household. Is your heart meaner even than that? And is it not filled with grateful love for Him who has taken upon Himself your responsibility both in this world and in the next? So, if you find after giving the power of attorney that you do not feel any joy in calling on God, then know for certain that you have neither given properly the power of attorney to Him nor has He taken upon Himself your responsibility. Do not deceive yourself any more thinking that you have given the power of attorney and do not attribute the stain of your own evil actions to the stainless divine Lord eternally free from the touch of any evil whatever. To do so is most maleficent and harmful to yourself. Remember the Master’s story of a Brahmin killing a cow:

17. The story of a Brahmin killing a cow

A Brahmin succeeded, with much effort and great pains, in rearing up a beautiful garden. He planted various kinds of fruit-and-flower-bearing trees and felt great joy at their luxuriant growth. One day, finding the gate open, a cow entered the garden and was cropping the plants. The Brahmin was away on business. He returned and found that the cow was even then feeding on his plants. He violently assaulted the cow and gave her such a blow with a stick on a vital part of the body that she died. The Brahmin was seized with fear, and thought, “Alas, I, a Brahmin, have killed a cow—which is the greatest of sins.” The Brahmin had read a little of the Vedanta and remembered that human sense-organs derive their power of functioning from particular gods; for example, the eye derives its sight from the Sun-

god, the ear its hearing from the Wind-god,[1] the hand its movements from Indra, and so on. The Brahmin now recollected those words, and thought, “It is then not I who killed the cow. The hand was moved by the power of Indra; it is therefore Indra who has killed the cow.” The Brahmin felt relieved at this argument.

18. The understanding of the Master’s words becomes deeper with the development of the Sadhaka’s mind

Now, the sin of killing of the cow came to enter the body of the Brahmin, but the Brahmin’s mind drove it away. He said, “Go away, you nave no place here; Indra has killed her, go to him.” So the sin went to seize Indra. Indra said to the sin, “Wait a little please, let me go, speak a word or two with the Brahmin and come back. Seize me then if you like”. Saying so, Indra assumed a human form, entered the Brahmin’s garden and saw him standing close by and looking after the plants and trees. Indra began to praise the beauty of the garden in the Brahmin’s hearing; and, slowly proceeding towards the Brahmin, said, “Oh, what a beautiful garden this is! With what good taste have the plants and trees been planted, each in its proper place!” Saying so, he approached the Brahmin and said, “Sir, can you tell me whose garden this is? Who is it that has planted the trees and plants so beautifully?” Hearing the praise of the garden, the Brahmin was beside himself with joy and said, “Sir, this is my garden; it is I who have planted all these. Come, let me show you round.” While he was thus taking Indra round and talking many things about the garden, praising himself all the time, he came inadvertently to the place where the dead cow was lying. Startled, as it were, Indra asked, “Oh! Who has killed the cow here?” The Brahmin who was all the while speaking of everything in the garden saying, “I have done this”, “I have done that”, was at a loss and did not know what to say and remained utterly silent. Indra then assumed his own form and said, “Ah, you hypocrite, you have done whatever is good in the garden and it is the killing of the cow alone that devolves on me! Is that so? Here is your sin of cow-killing. Take it.” Saying so, Indra disappeared and the sin came and took possession of the Brahmin’s body.

19. Understanding will come at the right time

So much for the power of attorney. Let us now follow the main topic.[1] Ask any devotee of the Master and he will unhesitatingly declare that with the passage of time, he finds through the Master's grace, deeper and deeper meanings in his words. Further, we are now amazed to find wonderful meanings and sentiments in many of the Master's words and actions, which at the time of hearing or seeing them yielded no clear meaning and which we simply took in, charmed by his personality. The favourite saying of the Master was, "Ah, my children, you will succeed at the right time, you will understand at the proper time. Can you get a fruit immediately you sow the seed? First there is a sprout, then a sapling, then it grows into a plant, next it produces flowers and at last it yields fruits; it is just like that. But one has to persevere and not give, it up. Listen to what is said in this song." Saying so, the Master would sing in his melodious voice:

"Oh brother, persist joyfully,
You will succeed gradually,
What went wrong will be set right.
Anka was saved, Banka was saved,
And the butcher Sujan was saved,
Teaching the parrot, the prostitute was saved,
So was saved Mira Bai.
Having the wealth and treasure of the world,
The trader still drives the bullock,
When misfortune overtakes him,
No trace (of all these) will be left.
Have such deep devotion in your mind,
Give up hypocrisy and craftiness,
The King of the line of Raghus will be attained easily,
By virtue of service, worship and surrender."

20. It is necessary to stick to Sadhana

He would then say, "His service, worship and surrender, i.e., humility; everything will come right, if one has faith and adheres to these things; His

direct vision is certain. But if one gives these up, there stops one's progress. There was a man who had a job and with considerable difficulty he saved some money, little by little. One day, counting, he found that there was a saving of a thousand rupees. He was at once beside himself with joy and thought, 'Why should I be in service any more? There is already a saving of a thousand rupees. What more is necessary? Saying so, he gave up the job. A puny man with a puny ambition! He was puffed up on account of this paltry sum and looked down upon others. But how many days will it take to spend a thousand rupees? It got exhausted in no time. He then fell on evil days and danced attendance on office superintendents for a job. It will not do to act thus; one has to wait patiently at His door. If one is prepared to do that, then alone will one succeed."

21. Give up lukewarm devotion

Again while he was singing, "You will succeed gradually", the Master would suddenly say, "Ah, why gradually? One should not practise such lukewarm devotion. One should have the burning faith in one's heart, realization must come just now, I will see Him this very moment. Can half-hearted devotion help one to realize Him?"

22. The Master, an embodiment of spiritual moods, used to have bodily changes with the change of moods

Whenever we looked at the Master, we felt that he was the very embodiment of spiritual moods. We felt that we saw his form because the spiritual moods had consolidated them selves in him, so to say. We talk glibly of physical changes taking place simultaneously with the changes of mental moods, but come across only a little of such phenomenon. But we could not imagine even in a dream that the surge of mental moods could bring about so much of change in the body, as in the case of the Master. In Nirvikalpa Samadhi, the Master's "I" consciousness disappeared totally and along with it his pulse, heartbeat, etc., also stopped simultaneously. Mahendralal Sarkar and other doctors examined him with the help of instruments and found no sign of the functioning of his heart.[1] Not satisfied

with that, his friend, another doctor, went further and touched with his finger the Master's eyeball, and found it insensitive to touch like that of a dead man. At the time of practising "Sakhi-bhava" the Master continually meditated on himself as a woman servant of Sri Krishna and became so much identified with that idea that womanly behaviour, woman's mode of standing, walking, sitting, talking, etc., were naturally manifested in his body, so much so that Mathuranath and others who were his constant companions, mistook him on many occasions for a woman guest.[1] We have heard so much from the Master and have ourselves seen so many similar phenomena, that the laws of modem Psychology and Physiology so far considered to be conclusive have to be re-enunciated. "Will people believe these occurrences even if they are told?

23. The Master's power of knowing all the moods in all persons

But the most striking thing we have seen in him is his power of roaming everywhere in the realm of ideas; his power of understanding all ideas, great or small, of all persons, of a boy or an adult, of a monk or a householder, of a devotee or a Vedantin, of man or woman; his power of grasping the inner thoughts and sentiments of each spiritual aspirant, of knowing how far he had advanced in the realm of spirituality, what path he had adopted, what his current needs were for taking him further along his own line of progress; and what is most important, his wonderful power of prescribing just the course needed and suitable. When we deeply think of these things, it seems to us that the Master had previously experienced in his life the whole range of ideas past, present and future without exception; that he had stored his memory in great detail with the entire history of each of the states from the time of its appearance to that of its disappearance; and that it was owing to this fact that whenever anyone came and told him of his mental state, he grasped and understood it by comparing it with what was stored up in his mind and gave the appropriate prescription then and there. This was his rule in everything. When anyone came to him as an humble inquirer, confronted with extremely trying situations like worldly attachment, worldly turmoil, the persistence of some idea or emotion contrary to the practice of renunciation etc., and unable to find a way out,

the Master would invariably give him the proper direction and, by way of encouragement, tell him his own experiences under similar conditions. He would say, “My child, such and such events came to pass then and I adopted such and such means.” It is needless to add that great hope filled the inquirer’s heart when the Master said so and with much faith and perseverance he went forward along the path specified by the Master. That was not all; but he felt how great the Master’s love for him was when he saw him confiding his heart’s secrets to him. One or two examples will make this clear.

24. First example: Manimohan’s grief over the death of his son

A promising son of Manimohan Mallick of Sinduriapati, Calcutta, died. No sooner had he performed the ceremonies connected with the cremation than Manimohan came to the Master. Saluting the Master he sat with a heavy heart in a corner of the room. He saw many inquiring devotees, seekers after truth, men and women, sitting in the room and the Master was talking to them on various spiritual topics. He had sat for a short time when the Master’s eyes happened to fall on him and with a nod of his head, he asked him, “Well, why do you look so sad today?” In a choked voice, Manimohan answered, “So-and-so (naming his son) died today.” Seeing his haggard appearance and hearing his choked voice, everyone in the room was dumbfounded and sat speechless. Everyone felt that any word of consolation could not assuage the deep pain and agony raging in his heart. Nevertheless they began to console him in words such as “Such is the way of the world, everyone must die some day, whatever has happened cannot be undone by shedding tears a thousand times; therefore give up grief, have patience.” Man has been consoling men and women struck with grief from the beginning of creation in these words. But, alas, how few are the hearts that are thereby consoled! And how can they be? It is only when the three things viz., our minds, words, and actions are inspired by the same feeling that our words can touch others’ hearts and raise similar waves of feeling there. But with us this qualification is altogether wanting; we say, “The world is transitory,” but every thought and action of ours is contrary to this idea. Though we advise others to consider this world to be transitory like a

dream, we always regard it in our heart of hearts as eternal and make arrangements for living here for ever. How can our words acquire that power?

Although all the others poured forth the hackneyed phrases of consolation to Manimohan, the Master was all the time merely listening to his words of grief without speaking anything whatever. When they saw that indifferent mood of his, some were surprised and thought how hard, how devoid of compassion, his heart was.

As he was listening to the words of the old man, the Master gradually passed into ecstasy—a state of divine semi-consciousness. Suddenly with the pose and energy of a wrestler he struck his left arm just below the shoulder with the palm of his right hand, stood up and began singing with an unprecedented vigour:

O man, prepare yourself for battle.

There, see Death entering your house in battle array;

(Therefore) ride on the chariot of great virtue,

Harness to it the two horses of devotion and spiritual practice,

Stretch up the bow of knowledge,

And set the unfailing arrow of the love of God.

Listen, there is another plan of good strategy;

All the enemies can be killed without a chariot or a charioteer,

If Dasarathi[1] takes the field on the bank of the Bhagirathi.

The tune of the song expressing great vigour and the appropriate gesture coupled with the spirit of heroic renunciation and strength coursing from the Master's eyes produced in the hearts of all a current of wonderful hope and energy. The heart of every one was raised from the realm of grief and delusion, and filled with a wonderful divine bliss which was beyond the senses and beyond the world. Manimohan too felt it in his heart, forgot the agonizing grief and was now calm, grave and in perfect peace.

The song came to an end; but its few words, so sung by the Master, generated waves of spirituality, which filled the room for a long time and were palpably felt like a presence by all. All were still and lost themselves in the spiritual mood: "It is God alone who is our own, we offer our heart and life to Him. May He bestow His compassion on us and reveal Himself to us." When the Master's ecstasy came to an end a little later, he sat by the side of Manimohan and said, "Ah! What burning pain is there on earth which can compare with the grief at the death of a son? A son is born of this sheath (body); isn't he? So his relation with the body persists as long as it lasts." Saying so, the Master began to describe to him the death of Akshay as an example, so touchingly that it seemed as if he was visualising before his eyes the death of his relative. He said, "Akshay died. I felt nothing at the time. I was standing and was witnessing how man dies. I saw there was, as it were, a sword in a sheath and the sword was brought out of it. The sword was not at all affected. It remained as it was and the sheath lay there. I felt great joy to see it. I laughed and sang and danced. They then burnt the boy and returned. The next day I was standing there (pointing to the verandah to the east of the room and near the courtyard of the Kali temple), and do you know what I felt? I felt as if my heart was being wrung in the way a wet towel is wrung. My heart was feeling for Akshay like that. I thought, "Mother, this (his body) has no relation with even the cloth it wears; ah, how great was then the relation with the nephew! When it is so even here (with himself), how agonizing the pain must be to the householders! Thou art showing that, aren't you?"

"But do you know? "continued: the Master, a little later, "Those who take refuge in Him do not go down to the bottom even on account of this unbearable grief. They regain their balance but after a few tossings. Persons of small capacity, like small vessels, lose their control, their balance, altogether and go down. Haven't you noticed the plight of the small fishing boats when steamers pass through the Ganga? It looks as if they are lost and are gone. Some are capsized altogether. The bigger vessels carrying tons of load regain their balance after a few tossings. But a toss or two must be felt by all."

After a short pause of serious gloom, the Master added again, "How few are the days during which the relationship among all these (sons, parents,

etc.) in this world exists! Desiring happiness a man enters the world; he marries, begets a son; the son grows; he gets his son married; thus a few days pass pleasantly. Then one gets ill, another dies, still another goes astray, and the man is beside himself with worries and anxieties. The more the frustration, the louder the lamentation! Haven't you noticed how the wet fuel burns in a sweetmaker's oven? It burns well at first. Then as it is burning, the sap begins to ooze out through its hinder part and assumes the form of froth which bubbles and bursts and produces various kinds of hissing sounds. It is just like that." He was thus consoling Manimohan by speaking to him on a variety of topics such as "the transitoriness and hollowness of the world", "taking refuge in the divine Lord, the only source of happiness" and so on. Manimohan felt consoled and said, "This was why, Sir, I came running to you. I knew that there was no one else who could assuage this fire of grief."

We were amazed at this extraordinary behaviour of the Master and thought, "Is this the person whom we considered a short time ago to be hard-hearted and indifferent? One who is really great is not like the common run of people even in small matters. His greatness is discernible in every action, great or small. Is this the same person whose heart-beat stopped a little while ago while he was experiencing ecstasy or the nearness of God? Is he the same person, who, in sympathy with Manimohan's condition, is behaving like an ordinary man? He could have altogether dismissed the words of the old man, saying, "It is all a mere delusion, a trifling matter"; it is not that he could not have done so. Had he displayed his greatness that way, we would have felt that he might be a great spiritual teacher or anything else, but that he was certainly not of this world; we would have felt that he had not the power to enter into the feelings of ordinary mortals and would have said, "We wonder how he could have remained indifferent to the play of Maya if he had fallen but once into the helpless condition into which we, weak human beings, have fallen owing to our attachment to wives and children."

The very next moment, perhaps, a young man comes in a dejected mood and asks, "Sir, how can one be freed from lust? Passions and unhealthy emotions disturb the mind sometimes and make me restless in spite of me."

25. Second example: The Master's words on how to get rid of lust

The Master: "Ah, lust does not vanish till God is realized. So long as the body lasts, a little of it continues even after that realization; but then it cannot raise its head, Do you think I myself am altogether free from it? At one time, I thought I had conquered lust. When I was sitting under the Panchavati such an onrush of lust came that it seemed to be beyond my power of control. I then wept rubbing my face against the dust on the ground and said to the Mother, 'I have done a great wrong, Mother, I shall never again harbour the idea that I have conquered lust.' It was then only that it vanished. Do you know, you people are now passing through a high tide of youth. This is why you cannot stop it. When a high tide comes does it heed an embankment? It then swells up, breaks the embankment and rushes forward. Then water stands as high as a bamboo over the paddy fields. But it is said that a mental sin is no sin in the Kaliyuga. Again even if an undesirable feeling happens to arise once or twice in the mind why should you feel worried because of it? It is natural to the body, it sometimes comes and goes; pay no more heed to it than to the bodily functions, the calls of nature. Do people feel worried because of such functions? Similarly consider these feelings to be very trifling, unworthy of any attention and do not think of them any more. Moreover, pray to Him heartily, repeat continually the name of Hari and meditate on Him. Do not take notice whether they come or go. They will slowly come under control." The Master had become, as it were, a youth speaking to a youth.

26. Third example: Advice to Yogananda on this matter

In this connection, we remember Swami Yogananda, who was amongst the very few whom we knew to have conquered lust. One day he asked the Master that very question at Dakshineswar. He was then young, about fourteen or fifteen years of age and had been visiting the Master for a short time. A Hathayogi named Narayan was then living in a hut under the Panchavati and was attracting some people's curiosity by showing them the arts of Neti Dhauti.[1] Yogen said that he was also one of those people and thought on seeing those arts that lust perhaps would not vanish and God

could not be realized unless those were practised. He therefore hoped, when putting the question, that the Master would instruct him on some posture, advise him to take Haritaki or some other drug or teach him some process of control of the vital force. “In answering my question”, continued Yogen, “the Master said, ‘Go on repeating the name of Hari and it will vanish, nothing more will be necessary’. The answer was not at all to my liking. I said to myself, ‘I see, he does not know any process and that is why he has prescribed to me a useless something. Does lust vanish on repeating the name of Hari? Very many people are doing it; why does it not vanish in them?’ Another day I came to the Kali temple and instead of going straight to the Master, was standing near the Hathayogi at the Panchavati, listening eagerly to his conversation, when I saw that the Master himself came suddenly there; and no sooner had he seen me than he called me, took me by the hand to his room and said, ‘Why did you go there? Don’t do that. Your mind will stick only to the body if you learn, those processes of Hathayoga. It will not thirst after God’. I thought, ‘He is thus speaking to me lest I should give up visiting him’. I always had a high notion of my intelligence. What a free rein I gave to the intellect! It did not then occur to me that my visits mattered so little to him. Ah, such a roguish and suspicious mind I had. But there is no limit to the grace of the Master. In spite of harbouring such improper thoughts I was given refuge.[1] Then came the thought, ‘Why don’t I do what he told me to do and see what happens?’ Thinking thus, I took the name of Hari with a concentrated mind. And as a matter of fact, I began directly to experience the result mentioned by the Master.”

27. Fourth example: The story of Manimohan’s relative

Very many are the examples that can be cited of the Master’s ability to grasp the mental condition and needs of all. We have already introduced Mani Mallick of Sinduriapati. A relative of his, a woman devotee, frequently visited the Master. One day, she came and said to him with great humility that when she sat down to meditate on God, worldly thoughts, the words of one, the face of another, etc., came into her mind and she could not attain to restfulness. The Master at once understood the mood. He knew

that she loved someone whose words and face came to her mind. He asked affectionately, 'Well, whose is the face that comes to your mind? Whom do you love?" She replied that she loved a young nephew of hers, whom she was bringing up. The Master said, "Very well, whatever you do for him—feeding, dressing, etc.—do with the idea that he is Gopala; take this attitude that God resides in him in the form of Gopala and that it is He whom you are feeding, dressing and serving. Why should you think that you are doing all this for a human being? As is your mood, so will be your gain." We are told that as the result of doing so, she made in a short time considerable spiritual progress, so much so that she attained even Bhavasamadhi.

28. The Master's power of knowing all kinds of mental states of women

It is explicable that the Master could comprehend and know the mental states of men because he had a man's body. But one's surprise is unbounded when one thinks how the Master could correctly know all the moods of women upon whom God has bestowed an extra capacity for experiencing tenderness, affection for children, etc. "The Master," say his women devotees, "did not usually seem to us to be a man at all. It seemed to us that he was one of us. That is why we did not feel the slightest shyness or hesitation in his presence, as we do in the presence of men. Even if it came on rare occasions, we forgot it immediately and would express to him our feelings without any hesitation whatever."

29. Its cause

Did this happen because the Master completely lost the consciousness "I am a male" by constant concentration for a long time on the thought, "I am a woman friend or servant of Sri Krishna, the divine Lord", and by its realization? Patanjali says in his *Yoga Aphorisms,*"If the idea of doing injury to others completely vanishes from your mind, no one in the world, not even tigers and snakes, will injure you, not to speak of human beings. The very idea of doing injury to you will not cross their minds when they see you." This must be understood to be equally true of all other functions of the mind such as lust, anger, etc. Many examples of this fact are found in

the Puranas. One, however, will suffice here. The stainless young Suka, free from Maya and always merged in God-consciousness, was passing along having renounced the world; and Vyasa, his old father blinded by affection for his son, was running after him crying: “Where are you going, son, where are you going?” On their way the celestial damsels were bathing in a lake after leaving their clothes on the bank. They felt no bashfulness or qualms in their minds when they saw Suka, and went on bathing as before. But as soon as the old Vyasa arrived, all of them covered their bodies in great haste. Vyasa thought, “Ah, this is very proper indeed! My youthful son passed by before and they did not even stir; but they feel very shy seeing me, an old man.” Questioned about the reason, the ladies answered, “Suka is so pure that the only thought he always has in his mind is, ‘I am the Self of the universe.’ He is not at all conscious whether he has a man’s or a woman’s body. This was why shyness did not arise in our mind when we saw him. But you are old, you have been much acquainted with the gestures, postures and glances of women and have extensively described their grace and beauty. You do not, like Suka, look upon men and women as the Self and neither will you ever have the capacity to do so. That is why the idea of a male arose in our minds on seeing you; and simultaneously shyness also arose.”

30. The reason why women behaved freely in the presence of the Master

This very idea comes up in our mind in connection with the Master. His illumining Self-knowledge and his vision of the Self in all beings both male and female kept the minds of all near him raised so high that the ideas such as “I am a man”, “This is a woman” etc. would not usually cross their minds as long as they were with him. That is why, like men, women also felt no shyness in his presence! That is not all; that vision of the Self in them in the company of the Master became so deep-rooted at that time that at his request they performed easily and without any hesitation those actions which they considered to be compromising and which they could not perform at the request of anyone else. At the Master’s request ladies[1] of very respectable families who never travelled anywhere except by carriage or palanquin, walked on foot through the main road at day-time to the bank

of the Ganga, took boats and travelled to the Kali temple at Dakshineswar. What was more, they would perhaps go at the desire of the Master to the neighbouring market and make purchases for him and would return on foot to Calcutta at dusk. An example or two will make the matter clear.

31. First example

It was towards the end of 1884. The Holy Mother was then at her father's house at Jayramvati. Balaram Basu went to Vrindavan with his father. With them went Rakhal (Swami Brahmananda), Gopal (Swami Advaitananda) and several other devotees, men and women. A lady of a respectable family of Baghbazar, who had heard of the Master, had had a great desire to come and see him. She expressed this to a woman-acquaintance of hers. The latter was told of this because she had been frequently visiting the Master for the past two years. A plan was fixed; and in the afternoon of the very next day the two arrived at Dakshineswar. They saw the door of the Master's room closed. They looked through the peep-holes in the northern wall of the room and saw the Master resting. Therefore they went to the Nahabat where the Holy Mother used to live and waited there. The Master got up a little later and on opening the northern door he found that they were sitting on the verandah of the first floor of the Nahabat. He called out to them, "Hullo! come here." When the women devotees came and sat down, the Master got down from his wooden cot and sat near the woman devotee who was known to him. At that she felt shy and was going to move away a little when the Master said, "Why this shyness? Realization of God is not possible as long as the three, viz., shyness, aversion and fear, are there. (Making a movement of his hand) I am verily what you are. But (showing the hairs of his chin) you feel shy because these are there. Is it not so?"

Saying so, he started immediately a conversation on God and gave them various instructions. The women devotees also forgot the distinction between man and woman and put questions and listened to answers without any hesitation whatever. When they took leave after a long conversation, the Master said, "Come once a week. In the beginning visits should be more frequent." Again, finding that they were poor, though belonging to respectable families and thinking they could not always get carriage hire,

the Master added, “Three or four of you should join and take a boat while you come; and walk to Baranagar and share a carriage there while you return home.” It is needless to say that the women devotees acted accordingly since then.

32. Second example on the subject

Another woman devotee said to us one day, “There was nice Sar (sweet cream) in the shop of Bhola, the famous sweet-maker. As we knew that the Master liked Sar we purchased a big piece. Five of us then together hired a boat and arrived at Dakshineswar without notice. But we were informed that the Master had gone to Calcutta. We were at a loss to know what to do. There was brother Ramlal there. Asked to which place in Calcutta the Master had gone, he said that he had gone to the house of the ‘teacher’[1] at Kombulatola. Hearing this, A’s mother said, ‘I know that house; it is near my father’s; will you go? Come, let us go, what is the good of waiting here?’ All agreed. We handed over the sweets to brother Ramlal and went away saying, ‘Please give it to the Master when he comes.’ We had already dismissed the boat. So we started on foot. But such was his will that hardly had we covered the short distance to Alambazar when an empty carriage returning to Calcutta was available. We hired the carriage and reached Shyampukur. There was fresh trouble awaiting us. A’s mother could not find out the house. After taking us from place to place she stopped the carriage in front of her father’s house and called a servant. He came with us and showed the house. Thus we succeeded after all in reaching the teacher’s house. How can I blame A’s mother either? She was three or four years younger than we—she was about twenty-six or twenty-seven then. A mere daughter-in-law, she never came out to a road. Moreover the house was in a lane and how could she recognize it?

“We reached, it with great difficulty. We were not then acquainted with the teacher’s family. Entering the house, we saw the Master sitting on a small wooden cot in a small room. There was no one near him. As soon as he saw us he laughed and said affectionately, ‘Ah, how could you come here?’ We saluted him and told him the whole story. He was very happy and asked us to sit in the room and began to talk on various subjects. Every one

now says, he did not allow women to touch him or even to approach him. We laugh to hear it and think, 'We are not dead yet.' Who will know how kind he was? He had the same attitude towards men and women. But it is true that if women stayed near him long he would say, 'Please go now and pay reverence to the presiding deities of the temples.' We have heard him ask menfolk also to do likewise. However that may be, we were sitting and speaking with him. Those two of us who were elderly sat very near the door and the rest, the three of us, in a corner within the room, when Pranakrishna Mukhopadhyaya, whom the Master called 'the fat Brahmin' came quite unexpectedly. Should we have gone out? No, there was no possibility of that. Where had we to go to? There was a window near the door. The two elderly ones took their seats there. And the rest, the three of us together made our way under the cot on which the Master was sitting and lay there. Each one of us had her whole body swollen on account of mosquito bites. What could we do? There was no possibility of movement. We were lying still. The Brahmin talked for about an hour with the Master and left. We then came out laughing.

"The Master was then taken to the inner apartment for light refreshments. We accompanied him there. The Master afterwards got into the carriage to go to Dakshineswar. We all then walked back home. It was about 9 p.m.

33. The Master bestowed equal grace on women

"The next day we went to Dakshineswar again. As soon as we were, there, the Master came near and said,' Ah! I took almost all your sweets; there is only a little left over. There was no illness or anything of the kind; only the stomach was just a little heavy.' I was surprised to be told so. Nothing suited his delicate stomach and to think he had taken a whole piece of Sar! Then I heard that he took it while in the state of divine semiconsciousness. I was told that the Master had taken his food at the house of the teacher and came to Dakshineswar at 10-30 p.m. Shortly after his arrival he got into ecstasy and said to Ramlal, 'I am very hungry, give me whatever there is in the room.' Told so, brother Ramlal brought the piece of Sar and placed it before the Master, when he ate up almost the whole of it. Then we remembered what we had heard from the Holy Mother

and sister Lakshmi of his taking abnormal quantities of food sometimes in the ecstatic mood and digesting them. Ah! so much was the grace we had from him. It cannot be expressed in words what that compassion was. And what attraction! Even we ourselves do not know or understand how we all used to go to him and do all those things. Why, we cannot now go in that manner on foot anywhere to unknown people's houses without informing anybody, to see a holy man or listen to words on spirituality. Such things have vanished with him by whose power we acted that way. We do not know why we still live though we have lost him."

Many similar examples can be given. Those who never went out of their houses were asked to go and make purchases in the market and also to beg from door to door in order that their pride and egoism might vanish. They were taken by the Master to the religious fair of Panihati and brought back after they had witnessed it and they also did all these and more, unhesitatingly and with great delight. It does not seem to be a small matter when we think deeply over it. The ideas which arise in the minds of all from the knowledge of difference of rank, sex, etc., and which restrain one's behaviour had been for the time being washed away by the waves of spiritual consciousness. Every one saw the perfect ideal of his or her own spiritual mood in the Master, who was an embodiment of different divine moods. Men bowed down their heads to the perfect manifestation of manliness in him; and women found in him the fullest manifestation of all the noble womanly moods, regarded him as dearer than the dearest and cast away all hesitation in moving with him.

34. The Master mimicked the gestures of women

The Master would now and then mimic the gestures and postures of women much to our merriment. We were surprised to find he mimicry so exact. On one occasion a woman devotee said to us in this connection, "One day the Master began to show in our presence the gestures which women make when they see men—that pulling of the veil, pushing back of the tresses near the ear, pulling of the cloth over the breast, speaking various unnecessary and meaningless words. The imitation was perfectly accurate. We saw it and began to laugh, but we felt shame and pain, thinking that the

Master was thus looking down upon women. We thought, 'Why, are all women like that?' After all we were women; we would naturally feel pained if anybody caricatured women like that. Ah, the Master immediately understood and said affectionately, 'Well, I don't mean you. You are not of the demoniac nature. It is women of that nature only who behave that way'."

35. The moods of both men and women coexisted in the Master

Every one of the devotees of the Master has more or less seen the co-existence in him of the moods of both men and women. Girish had an experience of this nature one day and took the liberty of asking the Master, "Sir, are you a man or a woman?" The Master laughed and said in answer, "I do not know". Who would now decide in which sense the Master made that remark, whether in the sense of a man of self-knowledge who means he is neither male nor female, or in the sense that he found in himself a harmony or blending of both?

36. The Master could understand the moods of all because he lived in the state of Bhavamukha

Dwelling in Bhavamukha, the Master became an embodiment of all moods and would thus exactly know all the mental states of all, men and women, appearing to either as one of their sex. He has himself expressed this to some of us. A highly devoted woman devotee[1] told us that the Master said to her one day, "I know the nature of a man by a mere look; I know who is good and who is bad; who is of noble descent and who is not; who is a man of knowledge and who is one of devotion; who will realize God and who will not. All these things I know, but I do not speak it out lest they should feel pained." As he was all along dwelling in Bhavamukha, the whole of the universe always, nay, every moment, appeared to him to be composed of nothing but ideas. He felt as if all things—men and women, cows and horses, wood and earth, etc.—were rising and merging as different aggregates of ideas in the universal mind and through those coverings of ideas the infinite indivisible ether of Existence-Consciousness

was manifesting Itself in varying degrees, here less, there more; and in some other places the veils were so dense that it appeared to be nonexistent. Again, the Master, the immaculate son of the blissful Mother of the universe, often started to merge in Her for good, realizing through Samadhi the bodiless state of absolute Bliss after the voluntary offering of everything belonging to him—the body, mind, mental functions and all—at Her lotus feet; but reaching there he came to know that the divine Mother willed otherwise. In complete obedience to Her command, he forcibly covered his mind, which had got fully merged in the indescribable state devoid of duality and non-duality, with the veil of Vidya Maya, the force tending Godward and engaged himself in carrying out Her behests. The Universal Mother, the embodiment of infinite power, on Her part, became pleased with the Master; and although She kept him encased in a body, She always kept his mind keyed at such a pitch, a high state of oneness, that all ideas rising in the infinite universal Mind were always felt to be his own from there and were so much under his control that whoever saw him felt that the Mother was the son and the son was the Mother; both were Consciousness. "The abode is Consciousness, the name is Consciousness, and the Lord is Consciousness."

We have said as much as we could; now reader, think and feel who this Master, the embodiment of infinite mood, is.

Footnote

1. Haramohan Mitra.

1. i.e., transfer your responsibility. When one person transfers the power of managing one's worldly affairs to another person, the latter transacts all business, grants receipts, carries on correspondence and signs all documents on the principal's behalf.

1. *Bhaktisutra* by Narada.

1. The Master was suffering from a sore in the throat when this conversation took place.—Tr.

1. The composer of the song.—Tr.

1. Soul of cardinal points—North, South, East, West, etc.—Tr.

1. Mentioned in Paras 1 and 2 of this chapter.

1. This examination took place in our presence when the Master was staying in the house at Shyampukur (in Calcutta) for the treatment of the disease in his throat.

1. It was in Mathuranath's house that the Master practised Sakhi-bhava.—Tr.

1. The composer: According to the orthodox custom of that time composers mentioned their names in the last stanza, perhaps to indicate that the sentiments of the-songs are directed towards themselves.—Tr.

1. To swallow gradually a wet piece of cloth ten or fifteen cubits long and about an inch broad and then to pull and bring it out is what is called Neti. And to drink two or three seers of water and to vomit it out is known as Dhauti. To draw water through the anus and bring it out again is also called Dhauti. Hathayogis thus force out all the phlegmatic humour and such other things existing within the body. They say this prevents diseases and makes the body firm.

1. He was a disciple of the Master and renounced the world.

1. The reader should remember that in those days such ladies would not come out in public.—Tr.

1. Mahendranath Gupta, the great devotee of the Master, to whom the public is indebted for his publication of *Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita,* translated into English as "*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna ".*

1. The mother of Swami Premananda.

CHAPTER II
A FEW WORDS ON BHAVA, SAMADHI AND DARSANA

(THE SPIRITUAL MOODS, PROFOUND MEDITATIONS AND SPIRITUAL VISIONS)

> Listen again to my supreme word, the profoundest. You are dear to me; therefore, I will tell you what is good for you.
>
> —Gita XVIII. 64.

It will not be an exaggeration to say that, before the Master became well known, the people of Calcutta, both educated and uneducated, were completely ignorant about Bhava, Samadhi or the extraordinary visions and experiences of the realm of spirituality. The uneducated masses had a fantastic conception about these owing to fear and awe; and the modern educated community allowed themselves to be carried away by the current of foreign education, completely devoid of the religious background, and looked upon this kind of vision, ecstasy, etc., as impossible or as derangement of the brain. The bodily changes due to ecstasy, belonging to the domain of spirituality, appeared in their eyes to be a fainting-fit or a peculiar disease. Although conditions have changed to a great extent, very few people are, even now, really able to understand the inner meaning of Bhava and Samadhi. Again, it is necessary to have a fair knowledge of the nature of Samadhi in order to understand, even to a very small extent, the state of Bhavamukha, in which Sri Ramakrishna was always dwelling. Hence we shall now try to explain a little of these to the reader.

1. Samadhi is not a disease of the brain

What the people in general do not experience is called by us “an abnormal state.” But the subtle experiences of the spiritual world can never be objects of knowledge for the ordinary human mind. Such experiences require instruction, training, constant practice, etc. The extraordinary visions and experiences make the spiritual aspirant pure and gradually make him fit for realizing eternal peace by filling him every day with new vigour and ideas. Is it then reasonable to call these visions, experiences, etc., abnormal? Every one has to admit the fact that all abnormalities without exception make men weak and bring about a deterioration in their intellectual and other powers. As the effect of the visions and experiences of the spiritual world is quite the opposite of deterioration, it must be admitted that the cause of all these is also opposite; and therefore these cannot be called diseases or derangements of the brain.

2. It is by Samadhi alone that one attains spirituality and eternal peace

It is through these visions etc., that especial spiritual experiences have always been gained. But a man cannot be fit to realize the eternal peace, till he reaches the Nirvikalpa state through the cessation of all mental modifications, and the non-dual state of consciousness becomes natural to him. As an example of this, Sri Ramakrishna used to say, “When a thorn runs into the body, one has to take it out by means of another and then throw away both.” Forgetting the divine Lord, man has come into this abnormality, the world. The abnormalities of sights, tastes, etc., gradually get attenuated by those visions and experiences, which ultimately lead man to the knowledge of non-duality. He then feels blessed by knowing the truth of the Rishi’s utterance:[1] “He is verily Bliss Itself.” This is the process. All the doctrines, experiences, visions, etc. of the spiritual world, without exception, help man to go forward towards that goal. Swami Vivekananda often said that these visions, experiences, etc., indicated how far the aspirant had gone forward towards the goal; he called them the “milestones on the way to progress”. Therefore let not the reader think that when there is a little intensity of a particular spiritual mood or there is seen the vision of the forms of one or two deities through meditation, spiritual realization has reached its culmination. In that case he will fall into a great error. Falling

into this kind of error in the religious world, aspirants miss the goal, have only one idea and are filled withhatred and animosity towards one another. If a man makes this error in cultivating devotion to God, he becomes “fanatical” and “bigoted”. It is this defect that is a great thorn in the path of devotion, and it arises out of the “mean narrow mind.”

3. It is not a fact that one can make no progress in religion, if one has had no vision of deities etc.

Again taking such visions to be the whole of religion, many come to the wrong conclusion that one who has not had such experiences is not at all religious. Spirituality and aimless miracle-mongering seem to them to be the same thing. But this kind of hankering after miracles does not make man religious; on the contrary it makes him weaker daily in all respects. That which does not lead to steadfastness and strength of character, that which does not enable man to take his stand on the rock of purity for the sake of truth in defiance of the whole world or that which entangles him more and more in various kinds of desires instead of setting him free from them, is outside the realm of spirituality. If extraordinary visions have not produced such results in your life and nevertheless you are having those visions, know that you are still outside the realm of spirituality and that they are due to a diseased brain and so are of no value. If, on the other hand, instead of having wonderful visions and experiences, you find yourself acquiring strength, know for certain that you are on the right path and that you will also have these visions and experiences at the proper time.

4. Faith, renunciation and strength of character are the signs of the realization of spirituality.

Finding that some of the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna were experiencing ecstasy while he, though he had been visiting the Master for a long time, had had no such experience, a friend[1] of ours felt much perturbed, and going to him with tears laid bare to him the distress of his heart. Hearing it, Sri Ramakrishna consoled him and said, “Don’t be silly, my child. Do you think everything is gained when that is attained? Is it something very big?

Know for certain that true faith and renunciation are far greater. Why, 'Narendar' (Swami Vivekananda)[2] does not generally have these; but just see how great his renunciation is, how great his faith and how great his vigour and steadfastness."

5. Ripe "I" and pure desires. The liberated -in-life: Adhikarika Purushas, Isvarakotis and Jivakotis

When the time for living in oneness with the divine Lord comes through the elimination of desires, helped by steadfastness, firm faith and single-minded devotion, some aspirants have sometimes on account of past impressions such pure desires as "I will do good to the people, I will act for the happiness of the many." Under the influence of such desires, they cannot then remain wholly in the non-dual state. They come down just a little from that high plane of consciousness to the realm of "I" and "mine" again. But that "I"-ness of theirs lives in constant unbroken consciousness of an intimate relation with God, such as "I am a servant, a child or a part of Him." That "I" can no more devote itself day and night to lust and gold. Knowing that God is the quintessence of everything, that "I" does not any more hanker after the enjoyment of worldly objects such as sight, taste, etc. It draws at will upon as little of the experience of those objects as is conducive to the realization of that end and no more. Those who were once in worldly bondage, but have now attained perfection by means of Sadhana and are living the rest of their lives in some loving relation with the divine Lord are known to be "liberated-in-life." It is those who are endowed from their very birth with the consciousness of such a special relation with God and have never in this life fallen in bondage like ordinary men that are termed in the scriptures as "Adhikarika-Purushas", "Isvarakotis", "ever-free ones" and so on. Again, there is a class of Sadhakas, who, after attaining the non-dual state of consciousness, never come down from that state even for the purpose of doing good to humanity; they are spoken of as "Jivakotis". And we have heard from the Master that it is these who are the greatest in number.

6. The experience of non-dual consciousness differs in degree in different persons

Again there is, amongst those Sadhakas who, having experienced the non-dual state in Samadhi, come down thence for doing good to humanity, a difference in degree in their experience of oneness with the Cause of the universe. Some of them have merely seen the sea of consciousness from a distance; some have gone near and touched it and others have drunk but a few drops. Sri Ramakrishna said by way of illustration, "Narada, the seer among gods, saw that sea from a distance and came back; Sukadeva touched it but thrice and Siva, the spiritual teacher of the world, took three sips only and lay devoid of consciousness of the external world. Becoming one with the non-dual consciousness even for a short time is what is called Nirvikalpa Samadhi".

7. With the deepening of the devotional moods, such as Santa, Dasya, etc., comes Savikalpa Samadhi

Just as there are differences in the experiences of the non-dual state, there are differences in the experience of the devotional moods such as Santa, Dasya, Sakhya, Vatsalya, etc.,— all belonging to the lower strata of consciousness leading the aspirants ultimately to the non-dual state. Some become blessed by fully experiencing the one or the other of these states; while others have just a glimpse of it. The full experience of any of these devotional moods has been termed in the scriptures on Yoga as Savikalpa Samadhi.

8. Bodily changes are inevitable with changes in mental or spiritual moods

The aspirant gets wonderful bodily changes, spiritual visions, etc., in all kinds of spiritual states of consciousness, in the higher non-dual state as well as in the lower Savikalpa states. Again, these visions and transformations are seen to be different in different individuals; these changes are observed in some people after only superficial experiences; while very little of these is observed in others even when they have

profound experiences. In illustrating this, Sri Ramakrishna used to say, “If a couple of elephants get into the water of a small pool, the water is thrown into a violent agitation and it overflows; but the water in a vast lake remains as still as ever even when scores of them get into it.” Nor is it a fact that mere bodily changes, visions, etc., are inevitable signs of the depth of ecstasy.

9. How to ascertain higher and lower ecstasies

If, however, the depth of spiritual experiences has to be measured it must be inferred, as said before, from one’s stead-fastness, renunciation, strength of character, the attenuation of desires for enjoyment, etc. It is by means of this touchstone alone and by no other means that the amount of dross in ecstasy can be assessed. One thing, therefore, is very clear, namely, the complete picture of the fully developed stage of one or other of the moods of Santa, Dasya, Sakhya, Vatsalya and Madhura can be seen in those persons alone who have realized their nature to be pure, awakened and free, by giving up all kinds of desires, and not in those who are entangled in the desires for lust and gold. One blinded by desires feels the attraction of desires only; how can such a one feel the sentiments towards God experienced by minds free from the slightest tinge of desire?

10. Incarnations alone can fully experience all these spiritual moods: Example, the Master’s Samadhi

We have tried to explain the nature of ecstasy as we have heard it from the Master. It is necessary to say here a few words more in this connection so that the reader may understand it clearly. From what we have said about a difference amongst the aspirants in the experiences of the moods of Santa, Dasya, etc., and of non-duality it is not to be inferred that even the incarnations of God remain confined within any limits in the matter of experiencing those moods. They can at will manifest fully in themselves any of these devotional moods. Again, they can, by adopting the non-dual mood, proceed so far in the experience of their oneness with God that it is not in the power of any mortals, Jivanmukta, ever-free or Isvarakoti, to do

so. For having once proceeded far in the experience of their oneness with Bliss Itself ordinary mortals cannot come down again to the realm of "I" and "mine" by separating themselves from the Bliss Itself. This is possible in the case of the incarnations of God alone; it is by the recording of their wonderful experiences that the scriptures like the Vedas and the Bible, have come into being. Is it, therefore, strange that the spiritual experiences of incarnations should go beyond those recorded in the Vedas and other scriptures? Sri Ramakrishna used to say in illustration of it: "The state of this place (meaning his own experiences) has gone much beyond what is written in the Vedas and the Vedantas." It is because Sri Ramakrishna was the foremost amongst them that he could return to the realm of "I" and "mine" "for the good of the many" and "for teaching the people" even after remaining absorbed in the non-dual state of consciousness continually for six months. That is a wonderful story. It will not be out of place to say a few words about it here.

11. The Brahmani asked him not to discuss the Vedanta

On the third day of his initiation in Sannyasa by Tota Puri, the Master attained the ultimate realization of Nirvikalpa Samadhi or complete oneness with God, spoken of in the Vedanta. By that time the Master had finished the disciplines according to the Tantras, and the learned Bhairavi Brahmani —the Master spoke of her as Bamni—who had collected necessary articles for these sadhanas and taught their applications, was living at Dakshineswar. We have heard from the Master that the Bhairavi forbade him to mix with Tota Puri and said, "My child, do not mix so much with him. These people lack devotion. Your love and affection for God will then vanish". But the Master did not pay heed to her advice and used to be absorbed night and day in the discussion of the Vedanta and its realization.

12. The Master's determination to dwell always in the Nirvikalpa plane; its nature

Tota Puri stayed at Dakshineswar for eleven months and left. The Master then decided to dwell continuously in the experience of oneness with God

or in the consciousness of non-duality, instead of remaining in the realm of "I" and "mine". And he began to act accordingly. That is a wonderful story. The Master was then not at all conscious that he had a body. Even ideas necessary for maintaining the body, like those of eating, sleeping, answering calls of nature, etc., did not cross his mind, not to speak then of desires like "talking with others." Neither did the ideas "I" and "mine", "you" and "yours" have any existence in that state. The idea of "two" or of "one" also did not exist there, as "one" may be felt only when there is the memory of "two". In that state all the functions of the mind without a single exception are completely stilled. A perfect calm prevails. There exists only "an indescribable something of the nature of eternal Consciousness and Bliss, incomparable, transcending all limitations, eternally free, nameless, limitless like ether, without parts, devoid of all ideas, an infinite immensity, untouched by cause or effect, a mood beyond all moods which a man of self-knowledge is conscious of in his heart during the profound concentration of mind called Samadhi."[1] Bliss and bliss alone! It has no direction, no space, no object, no form, no name. There abides alone the bodiless Self or the nature peculiar to Itself, indescribable and blissful; it abides as a mood beyond all moods and ideas which exist within the domain of mind and intellect—a state beyond all states, which the scriptures speak of as a sport of the self with the Self. The Master was always experiencing such an indescribable state without any break.

13. The unique constitution of the Master's mind

The Master said that no worldly object or relation acted as an obstacle in the path leading to his experience of the Nirvikalpa Samadhi according to the Vedanta. For, he had verily renounced for Her sake all kinds of desires from his mind. While offering everything to the Mother, he had said, "Mother, here is Thy knowledge and here is Thy ignorance, here is Thy good and here is Thy evil, here is Thy vice and here is Thy virtue, here is Thy fame and here is Thy calumny, grant me pure devotion to Thy lotus feet and show Thyself to me." Thus had he renounced all kinds of desires for enjoyment out of pure love for Her and in order to have a direct vision of Her holy feet. Can we ever imagine of doing this even to a small extent?

Leave aside having a direct feeling of that divine love for love's sake. Even if ever we say to God, "Here it is, O Lord, whatever is mine", immediately afterwards, when we require it, we oust Him, call all that "mine" and calculate our profit and loss regarding it. When we do anything, we think of what people will say. We get agitated in many ways and restlessly run after many things; thinking of the future, we alternate between the abyss of pain and the height of pleasure; we have this deep-rooted egoism in us, that if we cannot overturn the whole world to make it yield to our selfishness, we can at least give it a sufficient twist to serve that end. But the Master's was not a cheat's mind like ours; so the moment he said, "Here it is, O Mother, whatever was given by You", his mind never since that instant cast a covetous glance at it. Never did he have such subtle repining, as "Word has already been given, what can I do now? It would have been all right had it not been given." This is why we see that the Master could never call "mine", whatever he once said he had given to the Mother.

14. The Master's devotion to truthfulness

We would like to say another thing in this connection. The Master could not say to the divine Mother, "Here is Thy truthfulness and here is Thy untruthfulness, O Mother," though he made to her an offering of everything belonging to his mind and body, merit and demerit, vice and virtue, good and evil, fame and calumny and the like. Once the Master himself told us the reason of it. "If I give up truthfulness in this way," said the Master, "how can I keep the truth that I have offered everything to the Mother of the universe?" Ah, how great a devotion to truthfulness have we seen in the Master though he indeed surrendered everything else to the Mother! If he once said he would go to a place, he was there without fail at the proper time. If he once said he would accept a thing from a certain person, he could not take it from anyone else. When he happened to say that he would not eat a certain thing or do a certain action, he could not from that day on eat it or do it. "One who has devotion to truthfulness," said the Master, "realizes the God of truth. Mother prevents his words from turning untrue." Ah, how many illustrations of this point have we not seen in the Master's life! We would mention a few here.

15. First example

One day it was arranged at Dakshineswar that the highly devoted Gopala's mother should cook rice for the Master and feed him. Everything was ready; the Master sat down to take his food. He found the rice hard, not properly boiled. The Master was annoyed and said, "Can I eat this rice? I will not take rice out of her hands any more." When these words came out of the Master's mouth, everyone thought that the Master had only warned Gopala's mother in order to make her careful for the future; it was impossible to imagine that he would not take rice any more out of her hand, seeing that he had so much love and respect for her. He would forgive her a little later, and there the matter would end. But the contrary happened, for the Master had shortly afterwards a disease in his throat. It became gradually so acute that he could not take rice any more. In this way circumstances conspired to make that casual remark of his come true.

16. Second example

One day, while, he was in a spiritual mood, the Master said at Dakshineswar, "I shall not eat anything except porridge henceforward." The Holy Mother was bringing his food to him at the time. Hearing this and knowing that any word coming out of the Master's mouth never proved untrue she felt nervous and said, "Why, I shall cook for you rice and soup; why porridge?" "No, porridge" were the words uttered by him in that spiritual mood. Soon after, he got the throat-disease and it turned out that none of the preparations that are generally taken with rice could be taken by him; he lived on porridge, milk-barley, and the like.

17. Third example

The Master specified the well-known Sambhuchandra Mallick of Calcutta who was generous and wealthy, as the second of the four suppliers of his provisions. He had a garden near the Kali temple of Rani Rasmani. There he used to spend much time with the Master in discussing the Divine. There was in that garden his charitable dispensary. Sri Ramakrishna suffered often from stomach troubles. Coming to know of this one day,

Sambhu advised him to use a small dose of opium everyday and asked him to take it from him before he returned to Rasmani's garden. The Master also agreed. Afterwards, engaged in conversation, both of them forgot it.

18. The universal Mother did not allow him to take a wrong step

He bade good-bye to Sambhu and came to the road, when he remembered it. He came back to take the opium, but found that Sambhu had gone into the inner apartment. Instead of calling him, the Master asked his manager for it and having got a little, was returning to Rasmani's garden. But as soon as he came to the road, he felt a sort of reeling and could not see the road. His legs were drawn, as it were, into the drain by the road. He said to himself, "What is this? This is by no means the road." At the same time, he could not find out the cause. As a last resort he thought that there might be a mistake as to the direction, and turning to Sambhu's garden, he saw that the road leading that way was distinctly visible. He thought a little and came back to Sambhu's gate and ascertaining the road well from there, again proceeded with care towards Rasmani's garden. But no sooner had he advanced a couple of steps than he found himself in the same plight—he could not see the road. His legs were being drawn in the opposite direction. When it happened thus a few times, it struck him that Sambhu had asked him to take the opium from him; but instead of doing that he had taken it from his manager and that too without Sambhu's knowledge. That was why the Mother had been preventing him from going. The manager should not have given it without Sambhu's orders and he too should have taken it from Sambhu himself, as he had been asked to do. But as it was, two wrongs, theft and lying, were being committed by him. That was why the Mother was preventing him from returning. Thinking thus he came to Sambhu's dispensary and found that the manager also had gone. Therefore, he threw the packet of the opium through the window and said in a loud voice, "Hullo, here is your opium." Saying so, he started towards Rasmani's garden. This time he did not have that reeling and the road was clearly seen and he reached the garden without difficulty. "Have I not," said the Master, "completely taken refuge in the Mother? That is why Mother has taken hold of my hand. She prevents me from taking a single wrong step." There are

many such examples in the Master's life of which we have heard. Ah, what a wonderful thing! Can we even imagine the least bit of such devotion to truthfulness and such entire dependence on God? Is it this kind of dependence on God of which the Master spoke again and again to us in the following parable: "In that part of the country (Kamarpukur) there are ridges by the fields. People walk from one village to another along those ridges. They are narrow; the father is carrying the younger child in his arms lest it should slip; and the elder child, as it is grown up, has caught hold of the other hand of the father and is going along. As they go, the children see a white kite or something else and clap their hands in joy. As the child in the father's arms knows that its father is holding it, it is free from fear and goes joyfully; while the other child, who is holding its father's hand, forgets all about the ridge and claps its hands after letting go its hold, when it immediately falls down and cries out. Even so, he whose hand Mother clasps is without fear, while he who clasps Mother's hand is in fear; for, the moment he lets go his hold he falls."

19. The obstacle on the Master's path to Nirvikalpa Samadhi

Thus no kind of worldly desires or impressions stood as obstacles to the Master on his path to Nirvikalpa Samadhi, because owing to the intensity of his love for God, he felt no restraining force from behind nor any attraction for any person or thing of the world. The only thing that stood as an obstacle was the form of the divine Mother, "beautiful, more beautiful than the most beautiful", the only One that the Master was so long lovingly worshipping with devotion, knowing Her to be the essence of all essences and the cause of all causes. "No sooner," said the Master, "had I collected the mind and concentrated it on one point than the Mother's form appeared before me. I could not have the heart to leave that form behind and go beyond. Such was the case as often as I tried to make the mind objectless, driving away everything from it. At last after a great deal of thinking, I gathered much mental strength, regarded knowledge as a sword, and with that sword mentally cut that form in two. There was nothing left in the mind then; and it rushed quickly up to the complete Nirvikalpa state." These seem to us to be meaningless words, for, we have never made any form of the

universal Mother our own; nor have we established any loving relation with Her, never have we learnt to love anyone with all our heart. Whole-hearted, intense love, we have for this mind of ours and this lump of flesh. This is why we feel such a great fear of death or of a radical change in the mind. But the Master had indeed none of it. He knew the lotus feet of the divine Mother in his heart of hearts to be the only essential thing in the world and was devoting his time to meditation of Her lotus feet and to the service of Her divine form day and night. Therefore what else could support his mind in the world when he somehow removed that from it? It became completely objectless and devoid of all modifications and reached the Nirvikalpa state. Reader, try at least once to imagine it even if you cannot fully comprehend it! You will then feel how far the Master made the divine Mother his own and with what an intense eagerness he loved Her.

20. He was for six months in a state in which generally the body drops in twenty-one days

The Master was in that Nirvikalpa state continually for six months. “I was,” said the Master, “for six months in that state from which ordinary mortals never return; the body lives for twenty-one days only and then falls like a dry leaf from a tree. There was no consciousness at all, of time, of the coming of day or the passing of night. Just as flies enter into the nostrils and the mouth of a dead man, so they entered into mine; but there was no consciousness. The hair became matted on account of accumulation of dust. Calls of nature were perhaps answered unconsciously. Could the body have lived? It would have succumbed at that time. But a holy man came then. He had a small stick like a ruler in his hand. He recognized my state as soon as he saw it and knew that much of Mother’s work was yet to be done through this body; much good would be done to many if only it could be saved. Therefore he would carry food in time and, by striking this body again and again, would try to bring it back to consciousness. The moment he saw signs of consciousness appearing he would thrust some food into the mouth. Thus on some days a little food found its way into the stomach and on others it did not. Six months passed that way. Then the Mother’s command was heard, ‘Remain in Bhavamukha; for the spiritual enlightenment of the

people, remain in Bhavamukha.' This was followed by illness, blooddysentry; there was wringing pain in the intestines and it was excruciating. It was after continually suffering for about six months that the mind gradually came down to the normal body-consciousness; before that it used to go up and reach that Nirvikalpa state ever and anon."

21. What the Captain said about the Master's Samadhi

As a matter of fact, we are informed by those who had the good fortune to meet the Master some ten or twelve years before he passed away, that even then they rarely heard him speak, for he used to be in continual ecstasy for all the twenty-four hours, and who could be there to speak to? We have been told by Visvanath Upadhyaya, an official of the Nepal Government, that he saw him absorbed in ecstasy continuously for three days and three nights. Moreover he said that on such occasions when deep Samadhi would continue for a long time, cow's ghee would be rubbed at intervals on the person of the Master from the neck to the lower end of the backbone and from the knee to the soles of the feet in a downward direction. When this was done, the Master felt it convenient to come down to the realm of "I" and "mine" from high planes of Samadhi.

22. What the Master himself said about this

The Master himself said to us on many occasions, "The natural tendency of this mind is upwards towards the Nirvikalpa plane. Once in Samadhi, it does not feel inclined to come down. It has forcibly to be brought down for your sake. This force is moreover not sufficient for bringing me down, so I catch hold of some trifling desires of the lower plane, as 'I will smoke tobacco', 'I will drink water', 'I will take this', 'I will see so-and-so', 'I will talk'; these also have to be retained in the mind by effective repetition. It is only then that the mind gradually comes down to the state of body-consciousness. Again, when coming down, it flies off in that (upward) direction. It has to be brought down again by means of such desires." What a wonderful phenomenon! When we were told all this, we sat astounded and thought, "If the meaning of his saying, 'Tie the knowledge of non-duality in

the corner of your cloth and then do whatever you like' is this, ah, what a fine hope have we of realizing it in our lives!" We find that the only way for us is to take refuge in him and wait for his grace. But when we try to do so we are faced with difficulties in a short time. The roguish mind sometimes would think, "Why should the Master not love me more than others? Why should he not love me as much as he loves Narendra? In what respect am I inferior to him?" and so on. So much for the Master's mental make-up; let us now follow the main topic.[1]

23. Views of the East and the West on bodily changes produced by ideas

We shall now try to touch on a few aspects of the spiritual consciousness of higher planes and of the nature of Samadhi, as far as we have understood them from the Master's teachings, and then pass on to explain the state of Bhavamukha. We have clearly mentioned that some kind or, other of bodily changes is sure to accompany any ideas, higher or lower, arising in the mind. This requires no explanation; it is a matter of daily experience. It is easily understood by observing the ordinary ideas experienced every day; for example there is one kind of change when anger comes and another kind when love is felt. Again, when there is a great preponderance of good or evil thoughts in a person's mind so much change is produced in his body that one can know his nature as soon as one sees him. Looking at a man, we say among ourselves, "See, how angry he appears" or "how lustful" or "how honest". These daily expressions are clear proofs of our contention. Again, many of us must have observed how the appearance and gestures of even a person of perverted nature and of hideous appearance become gentle and free if he spends continually, say, a period of six months, for some reason or other, in thinking holy thoughts and living a good life. The Western physiologist says, "Whatever may be the nature of an idea that comes to your mind it will for ever leave a mark in your brain. Your character is built more or less of the aggregate of these two kinds of impressions, good and bad, and you pass for a good or a bad character accordingly."

24. Kundalini, the coiled power. The repository of the past impressions; how they are destroyed

But the Yogis and Rishis of the East, especially of India, say, “Those two kinds of ideas do not stop with merely impressing two kinds of marks in the brain, but they get transformed into subtle powers of impulsion and abide eternally in the sacral plexus called the basic centre (Muladhara) situated at the lower end of the vertebrae from where they urge you to do good or bad deeds again in the future. It is this centre that is the repository of these powers of impulsion accumulated in past lives. These are what are called “impressions” or “past impressions”; and it is only by the direct realization of the divine Lord or the attainment of Nirvikalpa Samadhi that these can be destroyed. Otherwise, at the time of leaving one body for another, mortals carry with them this bundle of impressions, “just as the wind carries smell from its receptacle.”[1]

25. The relation between body and mind

This intimate relation, spoken of before, between the body and the mind continues to exist till the attainment of the knowledge of non-duality or what may be called the direct realization of God. The body reacts on the mind and the mind on the body. Again, like the relation between the body and the mind of the individual, there exists the relation between the body and the mind of the whole of mankind, the aggregate of the individual bodies and minds. My body and mind react to the actions of your body and mind and *vice versa.* Thus do the external or gross world and the internal or the subtle world stand eternally related and are continually acting and reacting on each other. It is therefore noticed that you feel grief where others are in grief; similarly a mood of devotion comes to you unnoticed in the company of devotees. This holds good everywhere.

26. Holy company should be kept, as ideas are infectious

It follows therefore that like physical disease and health, ideas or mental modifications are also infectious. They travel to persons of the requisite

receptivity. That is why the scriptures have so much eulogized the company of holy men for infusing love of God into human minds. For the same reason, the Master used to say to new visitors, “Frequent this place; in the beginning one should pay more frequent visits here.”

27. Bodily change due to concentration of mind

The spiritual moods arising out of intense love of God similarly cause extraordinary physical changes. For example, when this kind of love grows in the mind, the aspirant feels less attracted towards sense-objects like sights, tastes, etc., takes less food and sleep; develops a taste for certain kinds of food, distaste for others; feels a desire to shun like poison his relations, worldly connection with whom deflects him from the divine Lord. The Master used to say in this connection, “I could not then bear the very atmosphere of worldly people, and felt when in the company of relatives, as if my breath would stop and the soul leave the body.” And again he would say, “The Mahavayu (the nervous vibration due to deep spiritual concentration) in the body of a man who calls on God sincerely cannot but rush to his head.”

28. The harmony between the paths of devotion (Bhakti) and concentration (Yoga)

It is therefore clear that the mental changes or ideas that are produced on account of the love of God have, each of them, a corresponding bodily picture or form. The Vaishnava scriptures took into consideration the mental changes or spiritual moods and have divided them into five, namely, Santa, Dasya, Sakhya, Vatsalya and Madhura; while the scriptures on Yoga have dealt with the bodily changes caused by those ideas or spiritual moods and have described the coiled power, the seven centres, etc., in the backbone and the brain.

29. What is the coiled power? Its states of working and sleeping

We have to a certain extent acquainted the reader with what is called the coiled power (Kundalini). The great seers who have written treatises on Yoga have given this name to that great power of impulsion which expresses itself through the physical counterparts of all the mental modifications that a mortal has undergone in all the past lives and is still undergoing in the present. The Yogi says that it remains almost completely asleep or unmanifest in mortals who are in bondage. It is in this sleeping state of the coiled power of impulsion that the mental modifications such as memory, imagination, etc., are rendered possible. If by some means or other it gets fully awakened or manifested, it leads a man to the realization of infinite knowledge and through it to the direct vision of God. If it is asked how memory, imagination, etc., can arise from the sleeping coiled power, our answer is: although asleep, it gets a sort of momentary awakening through the nervous vibrations communicated to the brain through the doors of sense-organs by external objects like sights and tastes, just as the hand of a sleeping man bitten by a mosquito automatically strikes it or rubs the bitten part of the body.[1]

30. The progress of the awakened coiled power.

The piercing of the six centres and samadhi

The Yogi says that the supreme Self or the divine Lord who is indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss resides in Its own nature of pure Consciousness in the space or the ether existing in the aperture[2] in the crown of the head. The coiled power has a great attraction for It, or to put it in another way, the divine Lord is continually attracting it. But as it is not awake, the coiled power does not feel that attraction. The moment it is awakened, it will feel that attraction of the divine Lord and approach Him. The path leading the coiled power to the divine Lord also exists in the body of each of us. Starting from the brain this path comes straight through the backbone down to the lowest centre (Meru Chakra) called the basic or Muladhara situated at the lower end of the vertebrae. This path has been spoken of in the scriptures on Yoga as that of the spinal canal (Sushumnavartma).[1] The Western physiologist has described this as Canal Centralis, but has not so

far discovered its function or utility. It is by this path that, separated initially from the supreme Self, the coiled power came from the brain down to the basic centre and has been lying there asleep. It is by this path again that this power arrives at last at the brain, crossing one after another the six centres, situated one above the other within the backbone.[2] As the awakened coiled power passes from one centre to another, the aspirant begins to have novel experiences; and as soon as it reaches the brain, he realizes the ultimate experience of the supreme knowledge of religion; in other words, he reaches the consciousness of non-duality, the oneness of the self with the supreme Self. It is then that the aspirant has the ultimate experience of his particular devotional mood. It is then that he becomes one with that great Idea from which all ideas are arising every moment in human minds —that Idea beyond all ideas.

31. The Master's experience regarding this

Ah, how very simple were the words by which the Master explained to us these intricate facts of Yoga! "You see," said he, "something goes up creeping from the feet to the head Consciousness continues to exist as long as this power does not reach the head; but as soon as it reaches the head all consciousness is completely lost. There is no seeing or hearing any more, not to speak of speaking. Who can speak? The very idea of 'I' and 'you' vanishes. While it goes up, I feel a desire to tell you everything—how many visions I experience, of what nature they are, etc. Until it comes to this place (showing the heart) or at most this place (showing the throat) speaking is possible and I do speak. But the moment it goes up beyond this place (showing the throat) some one forcibly presses the mouth, as it were, and I lose all consciousness. I cannot control it. Whenever I try to describe what kinds of visions I experience when it goes beyond this place (showing the throat) and think what kinds of visions I am witnessing, the mind rushes immediately up, and speaking becomes impossible".

32. His attempts at describing the experiences during Nirvikalpa Samadhi

Ah! How many times, the Master made fruitless attempts to control himself with great effort in order to reveal the nature of the visions, experiences, etc., he had when his mind reached the centre above the throat! "One day," says one of our friends, "the Master said very emphatically, 'I'll tell you everything today and will not keep anything secret.' He described clearly the centres and the corresponding experiences up to the heart and the throat and then pointing to the spot between the eye-brows he said, 'The supreme Self is directly known and the individual experiences Samadhi when the mind comes up here. There remains then but a thin transparent screen separating the supreme Self and the individual self. The Sadhaka then experiences—', saying this, the moment he started to describe in detail the realization of the supreme Self he was plunged in Samadhi. When the Samadhi came to an end he tried again to describe it and was again in Samadhi. Finally after repeated attempts, he said to us with tears, 'Alas, I have indeed a desire to tell you everything without concealing anything whatsoever, but in spite of all my efforts, Mother did not allow me to speak; She pressed my mouth.' We were surprised and thought, 'Ah, how strange it is! We see he is trying so much to tell us, and we realize that he is feeling pained also, that he is by no means able to express himself. That Woman, the Mother, is surely very naughty. Ah! Why press the mouth when he is to speak of holy things, things about the realization of God?' Did we then understand that the mind, intellect and the like with the help of which speaking becomes possible, have not a very long range? And again, did we then understand that the complete realization of the supreme Self could not be attained if one did not go beyond this range? Did we then understand that the Master was trying to make the impossible possible on account of his love for us?

33. The coiled power has five different kinds of movement on the path of Samadhi

The Master used to describe in detail the nature of the experiences he had when the coiled power went up through the Canal Centralis. "Look here," said he, "the something that goes up to the head producing a tingling

sensation does not always do it in the same manner. It has five kinds of motion as described in the scriptures.

1. The motion like that of ants—just as ants carrying food in their mouths creep along in a line there begins a creeping sensation at the feet, it then goes slowly up till it reaches the head, when there is Samadhi.

2. The motion like that of frogs—just as frogs hop twice or thrice and then rest and again they do so twice or thrice and then rest, and so on they proceed; a similar sensation is felt to move from the feet in the direction of the head; and as soon as it reaches the head, there is Samadhi.

3. The motion like that of snakes—a snake lies motionless in coils or at full length and the moment it sees a prey or is frightened, it wriggles zigzag to the prey or its place of hiding; a sensation like that is felt going upwards direct to the head; when it reaches there, one goes into Samadhi.

4. The motion like that of birds—a bird at the time of perching comes flying, sometimes a little high, sometimes a little low, stops nowhere and reaches its destination straight, when it takes rest; a sensation with similar movements is felt proceeding to the head—which culminates in Samadhi.

5. And the motion like that of monkeys—just as a monkey, when it goes from one tree to another, jumps from branch to branch suddenly and reaches the destination in two or three jumps, so a sensation is felt to reach the head in two or three jumps and Samadhi follows."

34. The seven planes described in the Vedanta and the Master's words on the spiritual experience in each of them

About the visions in each centre while the coiled power goes up by the passage of the Sushumna, the Master used to say, "The Vedanta speaks of seven planes. The experiences in these planes differ from one another. The mind normally moves up and down in the three lowest planes. Its attention is fixed to the anus, the organ of generation, and the navel—to eating, dressing, coition and the like. If, however, it happens to transcend those three planes and reaches the heart, one has the vision of light. But although the mind rises sometimes to the heart, it comes down to the three lower planes again. If anyone's mind goes up to the throat he cannot speak on any

mundane topics. He will speak only of God. In those days, I felt as if I was struck on the head with a stick when anyone spoke of worldly matters; I would fly to the Panchavati where I would not have to hear the talk on those topics. I would feel frightened and would hide myself when I saw worldly people. Relatives appeared to me to be enemies trying to push me down into deep pits; and if I fell once, I might not get up again. I felt suffocated; it seemed I was at the point of death. I could have peace only when I fled from them. The mind might come down again to the anus, the generating organ and the navel even though it had reached the throat; one should even then be alert. If, however, anybody's mind reaches the spot between the eyebrows he has no more fear of a fall. He then has the direct knowledge of the supreme Self and remains continually in Samadhi. There is only a screen, transparent like glass, separating this centre from the thousand-petalled lotus[1] in the brain, the Sahasrara. The supreme Self is so near then that it seems as if one is merged in Him, identified with Him. But the identification is yet to be. If the mind comes down from here it comes at the most down to the throat or the heart. It cannot come lower down. The Jivakotis never come down from this plane. After the experience of continuous Samadhi for twenty-one days the screen is pierced and the oneness of the self with Him becomes complete. To be completely merged in the supreme Self in the Sahasrara is what is called reaching the seventh plane."

35. The Master's retentive power[2]

Hearing the Master speaking of the Veda, the Vedanta and the science of Yoga, some of us, however, would sometimes ask him, "Sir, although you never learnt even reading and writing whence did you know all these?" The wonderful Master was not annoyed even at that strange question; he would smile a little and say, "Ah, it is true I did not study myself but I have heard much. I remember all that. I have heard the Vedas, the Vedanta, the Darsanas and the Puranas from good and reliable scholars. After hearing them and knowing what they contained, I made a garland of them all (the books) by means of a string and put it round my neck, offered it at the lotus

feet of the Mother, saying, “Here are all Thy scriptures, Puranas and the like. Please grant me pure devotion.”

36. He explained the non-dual state in simple language

He would say of the non-dual mood or the mood beyond all moods: “That is the last word. Do you know how? Suppose there is an old servant. His master is pleased with him on account of his good qualities, has faith in his words and consults him on all matters. One day he is very pleased, catches hold of his hand and tries to make him sit on his (the master’s) own seat. The embarrassed servant quails. Still the master drags him, makes him sit there and says, ‘Do sit down, you and I are one.’ It is just like that.”

37. To Swami Turiyananda

A friend of ours paid much attention to the study of the Vedanta at one time. The master loved him on account of his continence from childhood, devotion, steadfastness and so on. As he applied himself to the study of the Vedanta, meditation, devotional exercises and the like, the friend did not or could not visit the Master as usual for some time. This did not pass unnoticed. One day the Master saw a boy who used to visit him along with our friend, come alone to Dakshineswar and asked him, “Well, how is it that you come alone; hasn’t he come?” The boy said in reply, “Sir, he has now applied his mind intensely to the study of the Vedanta. He spends night and day in study, discussion and argumentation. It is perhaps because he thinks that time will be wasted, he has not come.” The Master beard this and said nothing more.

38. Vedanta is nothing but the conception that Brahman is real the universe is unreal

The person we are speaking of, came to Dakshineswar a few days after. As soon as he saw him the Master said, “Well, I hear you are now given much to the discussion of the Vedanta. That is very good. But does it not amount to this — Brahman is real, the world unreal? Or is it anything else?

Friend: “Yes sir, what else can it be? The friend says that the Master opened his eyes to the import of Vedanta in those few words. Hearing those words he was surprised and thought, “It is indeed true that everything of the Vedanta is understood when one is convinced in one’s heart of hearts of the truth of these few words.”

The Master: “Hearing, thinking and meditating. First hearing—you at first hear that Brahman is real, the universe unreal; then thinking—by reason and discrimination you get that idea deeply and correctly imprinted in your mind; and after that, meditation—you apply your mind to Brahman the real entity, by renouncing the universe, the unreal entity; that is all. Of what avail will it be if one hears and understands this, but does not try to give up what is unreal? It is like the knowledge of the worldly people. One cannot attain Reality by means of that knowledge. Conviction is necessary, renunciation is imperative. It is then alone that one can succeed. Otherwise you may repeat, ‘There is no thorn, no pricking’, but the moment you touch the thorn you feel the prick and cry out in pain. You merely utter, ‘There is no universe, it is unreal; it is Brahman alone that exists,’ and so on, but as soon as the objects of the world— sights, tastes, etc., come before you, you take them to be real and you get entangled. There came a holy man to the Panchavati. He used to speak incessantly on the Vedanta to the people. Then one day I heard that he had contracted an illicit connection with a woman. I went in that direction in order to ease myself, when I saw him sitting there. I said, ‘You talk so much about Vedanta, what is this talk about you then?’ He replied, ‘What does it matter? I can make it clear to you that there is no harm in that. When it is a fact that the world is unreal in the past, present and future, will my action alone be real? That is also unreal.’ I was annoyed When I heard this and said, ‘Fie on your knowledge of Vedanta. That is the kind of knowledge which the worldly people have of Vedanta. That knowledge is no knowledge at all.”

There the conversation ended. The Master told him all this while he was walking with him under the Panchavati. Our friend had been labouring under the apprehension that the Vedanta could not be understood, and liberation would be a far cry, till difficult books like the *Upanishads, Panchadasi* and the like were studied and a clear understanding of the philosophical systems like Sankhya, Nyaya, etc., was attained. From the

Master's talk that day, he came to understand that the only purpose of all Vedantic discussions was to have that conviction in one's heart. One might read basketfuls of books on philosophy and logic, but if one did not have the firm conviction, "Brahman alone is real, the world unreal", it would make no difference whether one studied them or not. He bade good-bye to the Master and returned to Calcutta, deciding that he should thenceforward apply his mind more to the practice of spirituality than to the study of books. Determined to know God direct through spiritual practices, he now applied himself whole-heartedly to them.

Whenever the Master came to the house of anyone in Calcutta the news of his coming spread in a short time to the devotees of the inner circle. No one in particular took the responsibility of spreading it among all. But the hearts of the devotees were extremely eager to see him, so much so that if, prevented by business, they could not go to Dakshineswar to meet him, they would very often visit one another's house and derive great joy in conversing about him. If anyone amongst them somehow came to know of the Master's arrival, the news would travel automatically from mouth to mouth and spread amongst them all. It is very difficult to explain to the reader how through the Master's grace the devotees were bound by an indescribable bond of love. It was in the quarters of Baghbazar, Simla and Ahiritola that many of the Master's devotees lived. For this reason the Master would come on most occasions to one or other of those three places. Of the three places again, it was to Baghbazar that he would come most often.

A short time after the event, one day the Master came to the house of Balaram Basu at Baghbazar. Many of the devotees of that quarter came to know of this and assembled there. Our friend lived near. The Master inquired of him. A young acquaintance of his fetched him at once. As soon as the friend entered the spacious parlour on the first floor of the house of Balaram Babu, he saw the Master surrounded by the devotees, and saluting him sat down near him on one side. The Master made loving enquiries about his health and welfare and went on with the subject of his conversation. From a word or two the friend understood the drift of the discourse. The Master was emphasising that nothing whatever, be it knowledge, devotion or direct spiritual experience, could be achieved

without God's grace. As the friend was listening, it struck him that the Master had introduced the topic in order to remove the misconception of his mind and the whole discourse was meant for him only.

39. The realization of God is not possible without His grace

He heard the Master say, "Well, is it a very easy matter to realize that lust and gold are really unreal and to have the firm conviction that the universe is eternally non-existent? Is it possible without His compassion? It is possible only if His grace produces the conviction in us. Can a man have that conviction by his own effort? Ah, how small is his power and how small is the effort he can put forth with that power!" Thus speaking of the grace of God, the Master went into ecstasy. After a while he was in divine semi-consciousness and said, "Man cannot have a clear idea of even one thing and he wants another." Then the Master began in that state to sing the song:

"Why are you proud O Kusa, O Lava?
Could you have captured me if I had not
Allowed myself to be captured?"

As he was singing, streams of tears flowed down from the Master's eyes and a part of the sheet covering the carpet got wet. Caught by the pathos of the wonderful teaching, the friend also could not check himself and shed profuse tears. It was some time before both of them came to the normal state. The friend says, "That teaching has for ever been imprinted on my mind. I have known from that day that nothing can be achieved without the grace of God."

40. The Master's answers when he was asked by Pandit Sasadhar to cure his own disease

We cannot refrain from mentioning here another fact about the depth of the Master's non-dual knowledge. When there was a crisis in the Master's illness at Kasipur, Sri Sasadhar Tarkachudamani heard of it and came with a few others to see him. "Sir," said the Pandit to the Master in the course of conversation, "we have read in the scriptures that persons like you can at

will cure bodily diseases completely. Diseases are fully cured if a strong desire be created in the mind that they should get cured and the concentrated mind be directed once to the diseased part of the body for some time. May you not just try this once?

41. Swami Vivekananda and other devotees asked the Master importunately to do so. The Master's reply

The Master said, "Ah, how could you, a Pandit, speak like that? Can I feel an inclination to withdraw the mind from the Existence Knowledge-Bliss to whom I have offered it, and place it on this dilapidated cage of bones and flesh?"

The Pandit was silent; Swami Vivekananda and other devotees, however, did not remain passive. As soon as the Pandit left, they requested the Master persistently to act as the Pandit had suggested. "You must", said they, "cure the disease; for our sake you must cure it".

The Master: "Ah, do I wish that I should suffer from a disease? I wish I were cured, but do I get cured? To be cured or not depends on Mother."

Swami Vivekananda: "Then please ask the Mother to cure the disease. She will surely grant your request."

The Master: "You say so, but such a request does not come out of my mouth."

Swamiji: "No, Sir, that will not do. You must ask the Mother. For our sake you must do it."

The Master: "All right, I shall see if I can ask Her."

After a few hours the Swami came again to the Master and asked him, "Sir, did you ask Her? What did the Mother say?"

The Master: "I said to Mother, 'I cannot eat anything on account of this (showing the sore in his throat). Please do something that I can eat a little.' But Mother said, 'Why, you are eating through all these mouths (showing all of you)'. I could speak no more for shame."

42. The depth of the Master's non - dual state of consciousness

Ah, how wonderful was his lack of body-consciousness! How extraordinary was the non-dual knowledge wherein he was established! He was then for six months continually on a daily diet of about half a pound of barley-water only. As soon as the Mother of the universe said in that condition of his health, “Here you are eating through so many mouths,” the Master became silent and bent his head in shame thinking, “What an evil act have I committed, I have called this limited body ‘I’.” Reader, can you appreciate even a little of this mood?

43. The Master stood the test of every kind

Oh, what a wonderful Master we had the good fortune to meet! What a marvellous harmony of all paths of religion,— knowledge and devotion, concentration and action, both ancient and modern have we not seen in him! The Rishis, the authors of the Upanishads, say that a person who is a true knower of Brahman knows everything and all his thoughts and desires come true—he becomes a Satya-sankalpa. All objects and powers of the external world obey his desires implicitly and undergo corresponding changes. Is it to be wondered at that his own body and mind will also do the same? It is not in the power of ordinary people to test the truth of that saying. But then it may well be said that the manner in which we, of small powers as we are, always used to test the Master in all things did not perhaps allow of any loop-hole for disbelief. The Master, however, stood the tests smilingly and used to tell us, as if in ridicule, “Ah, lack of faith even now! Have faith, firm faith. The very one who became Rama and Krishna is now within this sheath, (showing his own body) but this time the advent is incognito, like the supervision of his own kingdom by a king in disguise! As soon as there is publicity or whispering he moves away from that place. It is just like that.”

44. The things experienced ideally by the Master proved to be true in the external world

Many events of the Master’s life open our eyes to the truth of the above-mentioned saying of the Upanishad. All the ideas that arise in a man’s mind

are truly known to himself alone, that is, he alone can gauge their amount, intensity, range, etc. Others merely infer them from external signs. The subjective nature of these ideas is within the direct experience of all. All know that, like the ideas of ordinary persons, those of men who experience Samadhi are also mere modifications of mind or manifestations of mental powers; they arise in the mind and merge in it. It is impossible to see or show their counterparts in the external world. But the reverse of it is noted in many of the ideas of the Master. Take, for example, his desire to put up a fence round the Panchavati when he saw that-the plants planted by him were cropped by cattle. Shortly after, there was a high tide in the Ganga and all the articles necessary to make that fence—some mangrove posts, coir-rope with even a chopper came floating and ran aground just near the spot and he put up the fence with the help of the gardener of the Kali temple named Bhartabhari. Take another example, his assertion in the course of an argument with Mathuranath, the son-in-law of Rasmani, that "anything can happen by the will of God, a plant producing red flowers can yield a white flower too," and the latter's refusal to accept the proposition. The very next day the Master saw two flowers, one red and the other white, on two twigs of the same branch of a china rose in the garden. He broke the branch with the flowers and handed it over to Mathuranath. Take again another example: the arrival at the Kali temple at Dakshineswar of a perfected person in each of the faiths of the Tantra, the Vedanta, the Vaishnava, Islam, etc., and the initiation of the Master by each in his particular faith, whenever a strong desire to practise any of those faiths arose in the Master's mind. Or, still another example: The Master yearned to meet his inner circle of devotees whom he had seen in visions long ago and called them; and they came and he recognized and received them. Many such instances may be cited. On a close scrutiny of the subject, these facts make it clear that many of the ideas of the Master did not end like those of ordinary human minds in mere mental modifications, but produced corresponding changes in the events of the external world through the influence of an inscrutable power. These were the facts—now let the readers judge and discuss everything as they like.

45. The Master had different relations with different devotees

We have already said that the Master used to remain in the Bhavamukha[1] at all times except during the Nirvikalpa Samadhi. This is why we see that he used to have different spiritual relations of love with different devotees —a particular relation with a particular devotee— and he always kept that relation intact. His lifelong filial relationship with all women who are the especial manifestations of the bliss-giving, and nourishing aspects of the Mother of the universe, is now well known to all. But the fact that he had particular relationships with individual men devotees is perhaps not yet generally known. Therefore it will not be out of place here to say something in this connection. The Master divided his devotees into two broad categories—one born of a part of Siva and the other of that of Vishnu. He said that the devotees of these two groups differed in their nature and behaviour and in their love for spiritual exercises. And he could clearly understand the difference. But it is almost beyond our power to explain to .the reader what this difference was.

46. The two classes of devotees

Therefore, let the reader know this much, that the characters of Siva and Vishnu are, as it were, two moulds or models; and the mental make-up of the devotees is cast in these two moulds. The Master had all kinds of spiritual relationship of love, viz, Santa, Dasya, Sakhya, Vatsalya, etc., established with all those devotees—he had particular relations with particular persons. For example, he used to say of Narendranath, “Narendra is, as it were, my counter-part—the Principle that resides within this (showing himself) is female and that which is within him (showing Narendranath) is male.” He looked upon Swami Brahmananda as his very son. The Master had a particular relation of this nature with each of the especial devotees, both lay and monastic, and it is needless to say that he had the relation of calmness (Santa) with the ordinary devotees for he had the firm conviction that they were forms of Narayana Himself.

47. The Master knew the inner nature of each devotee and established his relationship with him accordingly

It is on knowing the internal nature of each of the devotees that the Master had a particular spiritual relationship established with him. For he used to say, “I clearly see everything in a man’s mind like articles in a glass case.” One can never act contrary to one’s nature; therefore it was not in the power of any of the devotees to act contrary to that spiritual relation of love in which the Master stood to him. If, however, any one, in imitation of another, acted contrarily, the Master felt much annoyed and would clearly point out his mistake. As an example, we cite the case of a devotee. The Master called Girish a Bhairava.[1] One day he saw during his ecstasy in the temple of Kali that Girish was a Bhairava. He would smilingly put up with Girish’s importunities and rude language; for he saw that there was an extraordinary tender feeling and complete dependence hidden under the covering of the rudeness of his language. One day, another beloved devotee of the Master imitated Girish’s rude language in his behaviour with him, at which the Master became extremely displeased with him and afterwards pointed out his mistake.

48. Through various means did the Master lead the devotees forward on the path of spirituality

Established in Bhavamukha, the Master knew well the spiritual mood natural to each man or woman, and in accordance with that mood had a relation of love with him or her. We shall here present the reader with some of the numerous methods the Master would adopt in leading each devotee to the realization of God according to his spiritual mood. It was after he came down from the non-dual spiritual plane in his first vision of the divine Mother in the temple that the Master practised the spiritual devotional moods of Sakhya, Vatsalya and Madhura to experience directly the bliss of those moods, and attained the highest stage in each of them. Long afterwards, when the devotees of the inner circle came to him, one day the desire arose in the Master’s mind that the devotees also might experience ecstasy and he prayed to the Mother accordingly; and immediately some of them began to have such experiences. In that mood of spirituality their consciousness of the external world including their own bodies grew dim to a certain extent, and an internal current of a particular spiritual mood, for

example, the thought of a form of God became so manifest that they saw that form come, stand before them, smile, speak and do things as if it were vividly living. They mostly experienced that state while they listened to devotional songs, music, etc.

49. The devotees and visions of gods and goddesses

50. A devotee had the vision of Vaikuntha

The Master had another class of devotees who did not have a similar experience when listening to devotional music, but had visions of forms of gods at the time of meditation. To begin with, they had visions of mere forms, then with the deepening of meditation, they saw their movements and heard their words. Others, again, had various kinds of visions in the beginning, but did not have any when their meditation grew deeper. But it is a matter of great surprise that immediately on hearing about the visions and experiences of each of them, Sri Ramakrishna knew the class to which each belonged, his current needs and his future visions and experiences. Let us mention here one devotee as an example. Instructed by Sri Ramakrishna, one[1] of our friends began practising meditation and other spiritual exercises and in the beginning began to see clearly his chosen Ideal in various forms at the time of meditation. He used to go to the Master at Dakshineswar at short intervals and inform him of his experiences. On hearing of them the Master would say, “very good”, “practise this way”, and so on. Later, that friend saw at the time of meditation that all the forms of gods and goddesses merged in the body of one form. When the Master came to know it, he said, “Fine, you have the vision of Vaikuntha. You will have no more vision!” Our friend said, “As a matter of fact that was what exactly happened. I could not any longer see any form whatever during meditation. Higher ideas such as the all-pervadingness of the divine Lord arose in my mind and occupied it. I had then a great liking to have visions of forms and tried hard to have them again. But all to no purpose, no form could be seen any more.”

51. The Master’s instruction to the devotees of God with forms. Silk thread and the sacrificial lamp

“At the time of meditation,” said the Master to the devotees who believed that God had forms, “think that you have tied with a silk thread your mind to the lotus feet of your chosen form of God, so that your mind may not stray away from there. Why do I say ‘silk thread’? Because, those lotus feet are indeed very soft and delicate. They will be hurt if any other kind of string is used.” He would sometimes say, “Should one think of the chosen Ideal at the time of meditation only and then forget Him at other times? You should always keep a part of the mind attached to Him. You must surely have noticed that a sacrificial lamp has to be lighted at the time of the worship of Durga. That light should always be kept burning near the deity, it should not be allowed to go out. If it does, it augurs ill for the householder. Even so, after the chosen Ideal is brought and seated on the lotus of the heart, the sacrificial lamp of meditation on Him should always be kept burning. While one is engaged in worldly duties, one should watch at intervals whether that lamp is burning within or not.”

52. Wash the mind out before meditation

Sometimes he would say, “Ah,. in those days before beginning to meditate on the chosen Ideal, I imagined that I was thoroughly flushing out the inside of the mind! You see there exist various kinds of dirt and dust (bad thoughts and desires) within the mind. I imagined that I was washing them off and was then making the chosen Ideal sit there. Do just like that.”

53. Which doctrine higher - God with forms or God without forms

54. The harmony between the doctrines of the Divine with forms and the Divine without forms

The Master spoke to us at one time about the meditation on the two aspects of the divine Lord, the one with forms and the other without forms, “Some reach the formless aspect through that with forms, others attain that with forms through the formless.” At the house of the great devotee, Girish, a friend[1] of ours, one day asked him, “Sir, which is higher—the conception of God with forms or that without forms?” “There are”, replied the Master,

"two kinds of conception about the formless aspect, the 'ripe' and the 'unripe'. The 'ripe' conception of the formless aspect of God is high indeed; one has to reach that through the aspect with forms. As regards the 'unripe' conception of the formless aspect, it is all darkness as soon as one shuts one's eyes, as is the case with the Brahmos."[2] As the result of Western education there was also another circle of devotees of the Master, who were proceeding in Sadhana through the "unripe" conception of the formless aspect of God. He forbade them to imitate the Christian missionaries in condemning the meditation on the aspect of God with forms, in hating the devotees going forward in Sadhana with the help of images of other symbols of the divine Lord and in calling them "idolaters", "blind believers", and so on. He said, "Ah, it is true that He is with forms and it is equally true that He is without forms; who knows what else He is, besides these?" "Do you know how God with forms is? Just like water and ice. By freezing, water becomes ice; ice is water inside as well as outside. Ice is nothing but water. But look here, water has no form (it has no particular shape) but ice has. Similarly the indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss-Absolute gets condensed at it were, through one's devotion and assumes various forms like ice." It is beyond our power to assess how many people got mental peace through this example of the Master, which produced in them the conviction that it was possible for both the aspects of the divine Lord to co-exist.

55. Swami Vivekananda and blind faith

We cannot but make mention here of another fact. Swami Vivekananda was the foremost in the circle of the Master's devotees following the "unripe" doctrine of the formless aspect of the Divinity. The Master placed him above all —not only of this class of devotees but of all classes of them. Having come under the influence of Western education and the Brahmo Samaj, the Swami used sometimes to pass uncharitable remarks on the devotees. This mood was particularly noticeable in him at the time of argumentation. But the Master enjoyed the fun sometimes by bringing about a vehement discussion between him and some devotees of God with forms. During such discussions it often happened that none could stand his

argument and some felt hurt when silenced by his keen intellect. The Master also described joyfully that fact to many persons on many an occasion and said, “The other day Naren ‘cut to pieces’ the arguments of so and so with the least effort. Ah, what a sharp intellect!” and so on. But the Swami was silenced on one occasion during a discussion with Girish, who followed the doctrine of God with forms. It seemed to us on that occasion that in order to make Girish’s faith more firm and perfect, the Master was on his side. However in the course of conversation with the Master on another occasion, Swami Vivekananda referred to the faith of the devotees of God with forms as “blind faith”. The Master said in reply, “Well, can you explain to me what you call ‘blind faith’? The whole of faith is indeed blind; has faith any eye! Speak either of faith or of knowledge. But no, you will speak of some as blind and some as having eyes; how is that?” Said the Swami later, “Indeed I was in a fix in trying to explain to the Master that day the meaning of ‘blind faith’. I could find no meaning for the expression. I have given up using that phrase since then, as I was convinced of the truth of the Master’s contention.”

56. Instructions to the followers of the unripe doctrine of God without forms

The Master used to view the followers of the “unripe” doctrine of God without forms and the devotees of God with forms with the same eye. He told them also what form of meditation would be helpful. “Look here,” said he, “in those days I used to imagine the divine Lord to be an ocean filling the whole universe and me to be a fish diving, floating, swimming in that vast sea of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss; And again, sometimes I considered myself to be a pitcher immersed in the water of that indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss-Infinite pervading me through and through.”

57. The Master advised the devotees to meditate on his form

He would again say, “Look here, once think of this (showing himself) before sitting down for meditation. Why do I say so? Because you have faith here. Thinking of this will remind you of that divine Lord. Haven’t

you noticed? Just as when one sees a herd of cows, one remembers the cow-herd, when one sees the son, one is reminded of the father, when one sees a pleader, one recalls the court, even so is this case. Do you understand? The mind is scattered here, there and everywhere; thinking of this it will get collected in one place and right meditation will follow when it is directed on God."

58. A relationship with God is necessary. It adds a Zest to meditation etc.

59. The "ripe I" and the "un-ripe I". As the relationship deepens, one can exert loving pressure on Him.

60. The example of a perverted woman

Moreover, he would say, "Hold fast to some form of God or some mood, whomever or whichever you like; it is then only that there will be steadfastness. 'He is realizable by means of spiritual mood (Bhava) alone. Can He be realized when one is lacking in them?' Spiritual moods are necessary. One should cultivate a particular spiritual mood and then call on Him. 'As is one's mood, so is one's gain; it is faith that is at the root. It is through a mood that love sprouts.' Spiritual moods are an imperative necessity; so is faith; it is necessary to hold fast, then only one succeeds. Do you know what a spiritual mood is? Establishing a relationship with God and keeping it bright before our eyes at all times—at the time of eating, drinking, sitting, sleeping, etc.—is what is called a spiritual mood (Bhava). For example, 'I am His servant', 'I am His child', 'I am a part of Him'—this is what is called the 'ripe I', the 'I' of knowledge. And 'I am a Brahmin', 'I am a Kayastha', 'I am the son of so-and- so', 'I am the father of so-and-so'—all these are the 'I's of spiritual ignorance. These should be given up, should be renounced. They bring about bondage by strengthening egoism and pride. Constant remembrance is necessary. A part of the mind should always be kept turned towards Him. It is then only that success comes. One must make Him one's own by holding fast to one particular loving relationship; it is in that way alone that loving pressure can be

exerted on Him. Just see, when intimacy first starts or is about to start, we address as 'Sir'; as it deepens it gives place to 'you', when it reaches culmination 'you' also sounds flat; then 'thou, thee' become necessary. He must be made more than one's own. Then comes success. Take, for example, a woman gone astray. She is just beginning to love a paramour; how much of secrecy, fear, coyness is there! Then when the love has grown intense, none of those emotions remain. She then stands outside her family fold, going the extreme length of holding him by the hand in the presence of all. If that man hesitates to take care of her and desires to desert her, she puts a piece of cloth round his neck and pulling him says, 'What, I have left home and all and have rendered myself helpless for your sake; and now you seek to desert me? Maintain me, you must.' Similarly a person who has renounced everything for God's sake and made Him his own, exerts pressure of love on Him and says, 'I have renounced everything for you, say whether you will now show yourself to me or not'!"

61. "I will realize God in this very life," such strength of mind should be cherished

62. Desires must be given up one by one

When he found that the love of God had decreased in anyone, he used to ask, "Why do you say, 'I shall realize Him in the next life, if not in this?' One should not have such lukewarm devotion. 'I will realize Him by His grace in this very life, this very moment.' Such strength, such faith, should be maintained. Can one succeed otherwise? In that Part of the country, when cultivators go to buy oxen they extend their hands to feel their tails. There are some oxen that do not get annoyed when people put their hands at the roots of their tails, but relax their bodies and lie on the ground. They know that these oxen are no good. Those oxen that jump up and become frisky, as soon as hands are put on their tails, are the promising ones. The man then selects his oxen out of them. Lukewarm devotion is no good. Have strength, have faith and say, 'I will surely realize Him, there is no doubt about it. I will realize him this very moment.' It is then and then only that realization comes." "Give up", he would continue, "all the worldly

desires one by one. Far from giving these up one by one you are increasing them; how can you then expect to succeed?"

63. Perseverance like that required in angling is neccessary

When the devotees of God both with forms and without forms were stuck in the quagmire of despondency in practising meditation, devotional exercises, prayer and the like with no response, the Master encouraged them thus, "Bait must be thrown into the water of the pond first, if one wants to angle for fish. You have perhaps been sitting long with the fishing rod in your hand; no sign of fish is seen and you think there are perhaps no fish in the pond. One day perhaps you notice the flouncing of a big fish and you immediately believe that there are fish in the pond. Another day the float on the line perhaps moves and you believe that evidently a fish has come near the hook. After some days, may be, the float sinks and you lift the hook and find that the fish has eaten the bait and fled. Again you put bait on the hook and holding the fishing rod you sit very watchfully. One day at last as soon as a fish has taken the bait you pull the line and the fish comes up on land."

64. The divine Lord is quick-eared; He hears everything

He sometimes said, "Ah! He is very quick-eared; He hears everything without exception. He has heard everything that you said to Him in your prayer. He will without doubt show Himself some day or other. He will show Himself at least at the time of death." He said to some, "If you cannot ascertain whether He is with forms or without, pray to Him saying, 'I do not, O Lord, know whether Thou art with forms or without; please show Thyself to me by Thy grace whatever Thou mightest be." He said to some others, "Ah, verily God is seen. Just as you and I are sitting together and speaking, so, He can be seen and spoken with. I say this in truth, in very truth."

65. The Master kept an eye on everything in spite of his great tendency to spiritual moods

If a person remains in the contemplative mood, in Bhava for all the twenty-four hours, contemplativeness increases so much that no worldly duties can be performed by him, nor can he apply his mind to the small things of the world. This is what we see everywhere. Examples are found in the lives even of people devoted to science, politics etc., not to speak of those devoted to spirituality. Ordinarily such people are unable to attend to the cleanliness of their own bodies or to other small matters like keeping articles of daily use in their proper places. But we see in the Master's life that he was meticulous about even these small matters, in spite of his intense contemplativeness. When he was not so, as in deep ecstasy, he lost consciousness of everything including his body. And when he was in normal consciousness he was careful about everything. This is a matter of no little surprise. We shall cite here three instances.

66. Firs example

One day the Master was going to the house of Balaram Babu from Dakshineswar and with him were going Ramlal and Yogananda. All got into the carriage. The carriage started and came up to the gate when the Master asked Yogananda "Well, have you brought the cloth and the towel?" It was morning then. Yogen answered, "No, Sir, I have brought the towel but have forgotten to bring the cloth. They (Balaram and others) will be glad to get you a new piece of cloth." The Master said, "What is it that you talk? They will say, 'What a wretched, unlucky fellow has come?' They will be put to trouble and will be in a fix. Stop the carriage, go and bring it."

The Master continued, "There is sufficiency and no want when a good man, a lucky one, comes as a guest. But there arises difficulty in everything, when an unlucky wretched fellow comes, and he comes on the very day on which there is dearth of necessaries in the house, and the householder has to undergo much trouble to look after him."

67. Second example

One Pratap Hazra, used to spend long periods at Dakshineswar when the Master was alive. All of us used to call him Hazra Mahasay.[1] He also

sometimes accompanied the Master when he went to see the devotees at Calcutta. On one such occasion, while returning from Calcutta along with the Master, he forgot to take down a towel. At Dakshineswar, the Master came to know of it and said to him, “I lose in the name of God the consciousness even of my cloth, but I never on a single occasion have left my small bag or towel behind at Calcutta, and you are so forgetful doing this little Japa!”

68. Third example: instruction to the Holy Mother

The Master taught the Holy Mother, “At the time of getting into a carriage or a boat go and get into it first and when leaving it get down last after examining whether anything has been left behind.” The Master had such an eye even for very small matters.

69. The last word on the topic

Thus, though remaining incessantly in Bhavamukha, the Master was careful about all the necessary things. He would keep a thing invariably at its proper place, take care of the articles of daily use such as clothes, the small bag of spices, etc., belonging to himself, inquire whether any necessary thing had been forgotten and left behind at the time of going to or returning from any place and always think how the environment of devotees might be made favourable to the spiritual practices by his constant searching inquiries into their worldly affairs to the same degree as to their spiritual.

70. The Master a Veritable king in the realm of ideas

71. His extraordinary power over the human mind. Swami Vivekananda’s remark on it

The Master appeared to us as a visible embodiment of the aggregate of all kinds of ideas. Such a great king in the world of ideas was never seen before. Constantly dwelling in Bhavamukha, the Master manifested in

himself to the fullest degree all the spiritual states from the non-dual Nirvikalpa to the Savikalpa, acquainted devotees of all classes with the details of their particular paths and goals and thus brought to them extraordinary light in darkness, unprecedented hope in despair, and incomparable peace amidst worldly trials and tribulations. Words fail us to express what a safe haven of hope he was to all of us, what power he wielded in the entire realm of spirit. “It is not a very difficult matter,” said Swami Vivekananda, “to bring under control the material powers and flaunt a miracle; but I do not find a more marvellous miracle than the manner this mad Brahmin (Sri Ramakrishna) used to handle human minds, like lumps of clay, breaking, moulding and remoulding them at ease and filling them with new ideas by a mere touch.”

Footnote

1. Tai. Up. 2. 7.—Tr.

1. Gopalchandra Ghosh.

2. The Master used to pronounce it like that.—Tr.

1. *Viveka-Chudamani,* 408-9.

1. III. 2. 8.—Tr.

1. *Gita,* XV. 8.

1. The fact is: almost the whole power lies dormant leaving an infinitesimal part of it active, which is sufficient to carry on the normal work of the body and the brain. But as portions of it are roused through Yoga, drug, etc., wonderful visions and experiences follow, ultimately leading to the non-dual consciousness.—Tr.

2. Ait. Up. II. 12—Tr.

1. Katha. Up. VI. 18—Tr.

2. Treatises on Yoga mention six centres and their places one above the other thus: Muladhara, at the lowest part of the Canal Centralis; Swadhishthana, at the root of the organ of generation; Manipura, in the navel; Anahata, in the heart; Visuddha, in the throat; and Ajna, between the eye-brows. It is to be understood that these centres are situated in the Canal Centralis of the spinal column, and that heart, throat, etc., mean the spots opposite to them in the Canal.—Tr.

1. In each of the centres there is a “lotus” differing from one another in the number of petals, colour, etc.—Tr.

2. II. 3. 3 and II. 16. 3.—Tr.

1. III. 1. 36.

1. The Bhairavas are a kind of terrific demi-gods, addicted to strong drinks and meat-eating and noted for their extraordinary powers; they are devoted followers of. Siva.—Tr.

1. Swami Abhedananda.

1. Devendra Nath Basu.

2. Let no one think that the Master condemned the modern Brahmo Samaj or the modern knowers of Brahman. We have mentioned it out of regard for truth. We have again and again heard him utter the words “salutation to the modern knowers of Brahman” when he saluted all the devotees of all denominations at the conclusion of the singing of God’s name. Every one knows that it was the great devotee Kesav, the well-known leader of the Brahmo Samaj, who first preached the Master to the public of Calcutta; and Vivekananda and a few others of the monastic devotees of the Master freely admit that they are indebted for ever to the Brahmo Samaj.

1. An honorific epithet added to surnames of gentlemen—Tr.

CHAPTER III
SRI RAMAKRISHNA AS THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER

Some look upon It as strange,
Others speak of It as strange,
Others again hear of It as strange;
Though hearing (seeing and speaking) no one
Knows It directly.

—Gita II. 29

1. The Master felt annoyed when addressed as a spiritual teacher, a father of a patriarch. How then is the mood of the spiritual teacher possible in him?

Those who have seen the Master but a few times and have not developed intimate relation or have had only a superficial acquaintance with him are amazed to hear from anyone, of his divine sport with the devotees as their spiritual teacher. They think, the man is telling a downright falsehood. Again, when they find that a good many people are speaking in the same strain, they think, "These people have formed a group and hatched a plan to raise Ramakrishna to Godhood. They are going to add one more to the already existing three hundred and thirty three crores of deities! Why, are not so many deities sufficient for you? Why do you not select any one or any number from amongst them? Why increase the number by another? Ah! how strange! these followers do not even consider that if their falsehood is detected, people will lose all respect for such a pure soul. Have we not seen him? How humble he was, how meek, how patient, how devoid of egoism — lowlier than the lowliest! You say, you have also seen that he could not at all put up with being addressed as a spiritual teacher, a father or a

patriarch. He would burst out, ‘God is the only spiritual teacher, father and patriarch. I am the lowliest of the lowly, a servant of servants, equal to a hair on your body, a tiny hair at that, by no means a big one.’ And saying so, he would immediately take the dust of your feet and place it on his own head! Has anyone witnessed such a humble attitude? And it is this very person whom they are making into a spiritual Teacher and God— that which he was not.”

2. As he had the firm knowledge that God is in all beings, the Master’s ordinary mood was that he was a servant of all

3. The play of the divine Power as spiritual Teacher was seen daily in him during his state of divine consciousness. What the devotees felt at his behaviour then

4. There was no end to the moods of the Master who was an embodiment of all ideas

It is because of the possibility of such controversies being carried on for an indefinite period that we are prompted to put in a few words about the Master’s mood as the spiritual teacher as we have seen and heard. For, as a matter of fact, the conviction that every being from the highest down to the lowest is God Himself was so firmly ingrained in him that the attitude of a servant not only of men but of all living beings was normal to him. It is, no doubt, a fact that during his normal state of consciousness, he regarded himself as lowlier than the lowliest, humbler than the humblest, and took the dust of the feet of all; and that at that time he could not really endure being addressed as a spiritual teacher, a father or a patriarch. Nevertheless we cannot deny the fact of the Master’s extraordinary exploits in the mood of the spiritual teacher. Then under the influence of the divine Power manifested in him he became Its instrument and by a mere touch put anyone in Samadhi or deep meditation or in the inebriation[1] of divine bliss never felt before. Or, when, in exercise of an unknown spiritual power, he removed so much of the impurity of one’s mind that one felt immediately an undreamt of concentration of mind, purity and bliss and, regarding the

end of one's life as fulfilled, entirely surrendered oneself forever at his feet, then we could not but feel that the Master was not that lowliest of the lowly but a strange divine Power manifesting Itself through him in play (Lila) and making him behave that way. Then we felt that the Master, as the revealer of the supreme abode of the divine Lord, was indeed the spiritual teacher and the saviour of the human beings who, blinded "by the darkness of ignorance, scorched by the three kinds of misery"[1] and suffering from the diseases of worldliness had been reduced to utter help lessness. Keeping this divine state of the Master in view, the devotees use the expressions "spiritual teacher", "the merciful one", "the Lord", and so on. We have actually seen it in Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna in this modern age that true humility and the wonderful divine mood of the spiritual teacher, contradictory though they might appear, can coexist in one person. And because we have seen that, we are now trying to present to the reader what little we have understood about how they exist together in the same mind. We feel diffident to explain correctly even the little we have understood and it goes without saying that it is beyond the power of both the writer and the reader to explain and understand it perfectly, for there was no limit to the moods of the Master who was established in Bhavamukha. The Master used to say, "There is no limit to the divine Lord." It is within our personal experience that there was also no limit to the moods of this extraordinary personage.

5. Ordinary people thought that the Master was a devotee and not a knower of Brahman. But if one understands what it is to be in Bhavamukha and under what conditions it is possible, one cannot assert that

As soon as people hear that the Master used to dwell incessantly in Bhavamukha, they generally jump to the wrong conclusion that he was not a man of Vedantic knowledge and that he always lived his life in the midst of the emotional surges of pain and pleasure arising from the separation from and union with the divine Lord. But a correct appreciation of the present subject is possible if we have a clear grasp of what it is to be in Bhavamukha and under what conditions it is possible. Therefore, let us here discuss briefly once again the state of being in Bhavamukha from a

different[1] standpoint. The reader will recall that the Master attained Nirvikalpa Samadhi in one day[2] and remained in that state for three days and nights at a stretch.

Question: What is Nirvikalpa Samadhi?

Reply: To bring the mind to the state in which it is completely freed from all mentations.

Question: What are mentations?

Reply: All the mental modifications such as the perception of the objects of the external world consisting of sights, tastes, etc., feelings of pain, pleasure, etc.; imagination, discussion, inference, etc., and desires, such as "I will do this", "I will understand that", "I will enjoy this", "I will renounce this", and so on.

Question: On what do these modifications depend for their existence?

Reply: On the knowledge of "I", "I". If the consciousness of "I" vanishes or is stopped altogether for sometime, there can be no modification in the mind nor can it grip the mind during that period.

Question: It is a fact that in the condition of swoon or deep sleep also the knowledge of "I" vanishes; is Nirvikalpa Samadhi then something like that?

6. Mental modifications depend for their existence on I-conscious ness. There is Savikalpa Samdhi when it disappears partially, and Nirvikalpa Samadhi when it vanishes completely. The difference between Samadhi and deep sleep or swoon

Reply: No, in swoon or deep sleep the consciousness of "I" continues inwardly; but the instrument called the brain with the help of which the mind has the consciousness, becomes inactive and ceases to function for some time; that is, all the modifications continue to crowd at the bottom of the mind. The Master gave the example of "pigeons sitting with inflated throats after eating peas, and cooing; you think there is nothing within their throats; but if you feel them with your hand, you will find peas all crowded there."

Question: How am I to know that the I-consciousness continues in that way in swoon or deep sleep?

7. The result of Samadhi is knowledge, increase of bliss and the realization of God

Reply: By observing the result. For example, on those occasions the heart-beat, the pulse, the circulation of blood, etc., are not stopped. All these physical activities too take place centering round the I-consciousness. Moreover although the external signs of swoon or deep sleep are somewhat similar to those of Samadhi, when man returns to the ordinary waking state, the amount of knowledge and bliss continues to exist as before, that is, there is not the least increase or decrease. For example, the lust of the lustful remains as it was, so does the anger of the angry, the greed of the greedy, and so on. But when the state of Nirvikalpa is attained these modifications cannot raise their heads any more; and extraordinary knowledge and infinite bliss fill the mind and doubts, such as whether there is a next world or whether God exists, vanish forever on account of direct realization of God, the cause of the universe.

Question: Yes, I see; the I-consciousness completely vanished for some time when the Master was in Nirvikalpa Samadhi; but what then?

Reply: Then, when the I-consciousness vanished this way, he had for some time the direct vision of the divine Mother, the cause of the universe. Not satisfied with that three-day vision he tried to have it eternally.

Question: What was the state of the Master's mind as a result, of that attempt and what were the signs manifested in his body indicating that state?

8. The vision and experience of the Master during his Nirvikalpa Samadhi of six months

Reply: Sometimes, by the complete merging of I-consciousness externally, the symptoms of death appeared on the body, and internally, the unobstructed vision of the Mother continued. Sometimes again, with the reappearance of a little I-consciousness, symptoms of life returned slightly and the vision of the divine Mother continued, though a little obstructed because of the intervention of the screen of the mind, which was then pure, transparent and holy owing to the preponderance of Sattwa. Thus,

sometimes, there was the vanishing of the I-consciousness, the complete cessation of mental modifications and the full direct vision of the divine Mother; again, sometimes, there was the coming into existence of a little I-consciousness, the manifestation to a small extent of the modifications of the mind, and simultaneously a slightly obstructed vision of the divine Mother happened again and again.

Question: How long did he continue to make that attempt?

Reply: Continually for six months.

Question: Six months! How then did his body last? For, a human body cannot last without food for six months and you also say that although the Master's I-consciousness came into existence now and then during that period, it never manifested itself in his body to such an extent that activities like the taking of food were possible.

9. How his body lasted during the period of the complete cessation of his "I-consciousness"

Reply: It is true that his body would not have lasted; and there was in his mind not the slightest desire to let the body last for any time; but his body lasted because the Mother of the universe wanted to manifest Her wonderful spiritual powers through his body for the good of the many.

Question: That may be so; but did the Mother assume a form and come to feed the Master by force for those six months?

10. A Yogi came, understood the Master's condition and fed him by force

Reply: Yes, it was somewhat like that; for a holy man came of himself at that time, nobody knows from where. He clearly understood that the Master's state, which was almost like that of a dead man, was the result of his practice of Yoga, and of his feeling of oneness with the divine Lord. The holy man stayed for those six months at the Kali temple and tried to bring the Master down to a little body-consciousness even by striking his body. And when the holy man saw that a little consciousness was returning, he would immediately thrust a morsel of food or two into the Master's mouth.

We do not know why the holy man felt unusual eagerness and took unusual interest in keeping alive an altogether unknown person who was dead and inert to all appearances; but it is only such events as these that are said to be brought about by the will of God. Therefore, what else shall we say except that such an impossible event became possible by the direct will and power of the divine Mother in order that the Master's body might be kept alive.

Question: Yes I see; what then?

11. The command of the Mother of the universe: "Re-main in Bhavamukha"

Reply: Then the Mother of the universe or the divine Lord or the cosmic Consciousness, who is manifested as the universe, pervading in and through all beings scient and nescient and appears as diverse names and forms—commanded the Master, "Remain in Bhavamukha".

Question: What is that again?

12. There exist, in the Reality which is "One without a second", a difference in Itself, consisting of the aspects of saguna and Nirguna and also the Virat "I-ness" pervading the universe. It is this universal "I-ness" that is Isvara or the divine Mother, and by It are brought about the world phenomena

13. It is this universal I-ness that is called Bhavamukha (the source of all ideas), for all kinds of ideas in the world have It alone as their basis

Reply: It shall be narrated. But to comprehend what Bhavamukha is it is necessary to understand, as far as possible with the aid of imagination, the then state of the Master. We have said that at that time the I-consciousness of the Master sometimes vanished altogether and sometimes reappeared just a little. Even when that little of I-consciousness returned, the universe did not appear to him as it appears to us. The world appeared to him as an "immense mind" in which innumerable waves of ideas were rising, surging and merging. The Master's own body, mind, and I-consciousness, not to speak of those of others, seemed to be but a component wave in that

immense mind! In that state the Master had the direct experience and vision of the real nature of that universal consciousness and power as "One without a second", as living and wide-awake and as the creator of all wills and actions, as the Mother of infinite grace—the same Mother whom the self-styled materialistic scholars of the West, looking through their clouded intellects and the material instruments, view as inert and insentient, though they admit it is one. The Master saw further that the "One without a second" is Itself divided in two aspects of Saguna (with attributes), and Nirguna (without attributes). It is this that is called "a difference in Itself", Swagatabheda, in the scriptures—that an immense I-ness pervading everything from Brahma down to the lowest created being was manifested in it. He saw that an infinite number of waves of ideas was rising in that cosmic mind; that the limited I-s of men perceived these waves of ideas in parts and mistook them as the external world and its various objects and spoke and thought of them and otherwise dealt with them. He also saw that the limited I-s had their being in, and performed their works with, the strength of that unlimited I; and that because of their inability to grasp and understand the unlimited I, the limited ones regard themselves as possessed of free will and power of action. It is this spiritual blindness that is called in the scriptures Avidya or ignorance. It is this universal I-ness existing between the aspects of Saguna and Nirguna that is called Bhavamukha; for, infinite ideas owe their manifestations to that all-pervading I-ness. This universal I is the I of Isvara or the Mother. In their attempt to describe the nature of this immense I the Vaishnava teachers of Bengal have called It the divine Sri Krishna, the embodiment of pure consciousness, which is of the nature of an "inconceivable difference in non-difference" (Achintya-bhedabheda).

14. The Master's experience in the Nirvikalpa state and in the Savikalpa or Bhavamukha state

When the I-consciousness of the Master vanished altogether, he remained in oneness with the unqualified being of the divine Mother beyond the limits of this all-pervading I. And with the vanishing of this ubiquitous I, vanished also the last vestige of the infinite waves of ideas in the I-waves

which go by the name of the universe. Again, when a little of I-consciousness manifested itself in him, he saw both the Saguna immense-I and all the ideas in It, united with the Nirguna aspect of the divine Mother. In other words, as soon as he attained the Nirguna state, the existence of the difference-in-itself in that "One without a second" vanished from the Master's consciousness. And when he was conscious of that Saguna immense I-ness, he felt that that which was then Sakti[1] was verily that Brahman. Saguna was indeed that which Nirguna was. Prakriti (the material cause of the universe) was really that which Purusha (pure Consciousness) was. "The snake that was motionless was then moving"; that is, that which was Nirguna in Its own nature was really Saguna in sport. After he had the full direct vision of the nature of the divine Mother in the combined aspects of Nirguna and Saguna, the Master got the command, "Remain in Bhavamukha", that is, "Do not remain as the Nirguna being by the complete merging of I-ness, but live your life and do good to people, living in constant and full, direct knowledge of the fact that you are none other than that limitless I, from which all kinds of ideas in the universe spring and that your desires and actions are verily Its desires and actions.

15. "Remain in Bhavamukha". Its meaning

Thus, to have the direct experience and conviction or feeling in all respects, at all times and in all states that I am that immense I, that ripe I, is the meaning of remaining in Bhavamukha. When one reaches the state of Bhavamukha, all the ideas,—such as "I am the son of so-and-so", "I am the father of so-and-so", "l am a Brahmin", "l am a Sudra", and so on—are completely washed off from the mind, and no sign of them is left; and one always feels that one is that immense I pervading the vast inconceivable universe. The Master, therefore, always taught us: "My children, all the I-s, such as 'I am the son of so-and-so', 'I am the father of so-and-so', 'I am a Brahmin', 'I am a Sudra', 'I am a Pandit', 'I am rich', and so on, are 'unripe I-s'; they bring about bondage. Give up these and think 'I am His devotee', 'I am His son', and 'I am a part of Him'. Keep this mood firm in your mind." Or, he would say, "Tie the non-dual knowledge (Advaita-jnana) in the hem of your cloth and then do whatever you like."[1]

16. Dualism qualified non-dualism and non-dualism come one after another with the spiritual progress of the Sadhaka

The reader will perhaps say: "Was not then the Master a follower of the doctrine of non-dualism? It must be admitted that he did not accept the non-dual doctrine founded by Sankaracharya in which the very existence of the universe has been denied, as the Master upheld a difference in the divine Mother Herself (Swagatabheda) and saw Her existence in two different aspects of Nirguna and Saguna". It is not so. The Master accepted all the doctrines of non-dualism (Advaita), qualified non-dualism (Visishtadvaita) and dualism (Dvaita). But he used to say, "These three doctrines are accepted by the human mind according to the stage of its progress. In one stage of the mind dualism finds acceptance; the other two are then felt to be wrong. In a higher stage of spiritual progress the doctrine of qualified non-dualism is regarded as true; one then feels that the Reality which in Itself is eternally devoid of attributes exists in sport as always possessed of attributes. One then cannot but feel that not only is dualism wrong but there is no truth in non-dualism also. Finally, when man reaches the ultimate limit of spiritual progress with the help of Sadhana, he experiences the Nirguna nature of the divine Mother and remains in oneness with Her. All the ideas, such as I and You, subject and object, bondage and liberation, vice and virtue, merit and demerit, etc., are then all merged in One."

17. Hanuman, a great knower of Brahman, on this topic

In connection with this topic, the Master mentioned the experience of Hanuman, who was a bright example of the Dasya attitude of devotion. He said, "At one time Ramachandra asked Hanuman, his servant, 'What is your attitude towards me? How do you look upon, think of and worship me?' 'When, O Rama,' replied Hanuman, 'I am conscious of my body, in other words, when I feel I am this visible body, I have the conviction that Thou art the Lord and I am Thy servant, Thou art One to be served and I am one to serve, Thou art One to be worshipped and I am one to worship. When I am conscious of myself as the individual self, one with the mind, the intellect and the soul, I have the conviction that Thou art the whole and I am a part. And when, again, I remain in Samadhi, in the mood that I am the

pure Self devoid of all qualifying adjuncts, I have the conviction that I am also verily that which Thou art, Thou and I are one, there is no difference whatsoever.' "

18. The state of non-duality is beyond speech, thought and imagination. As long as the functions of body and mind continue, one has to accept in practice both the aspects of God, the absolute (Nitya) and the relative (Lila)

The Master said, "One who has realized the non-dual state becomes silent! Non-dualism is not a matter to be described. As soon as one tries to speak or say anything, dualism becomes inevitable. As long as there are thought, imagination, etc., there is also dualism within the mind; non-dual knowledge has not yet been attained. It is only the reality of Brahman, in other words, the Nirguna aspect of the divine Mother alone, that has not come out of man's mouth, and thus it has not been defiled." That is, It has not been expressed by human speech. For this Truth is beyond human mind and intellect; how can It be spoken or explained by words? This is why the Master said about the non-dual Truth, "My children, it is the ultimate Truth to be realized." It is therefore clear, as the Master used to say, that as long as the ideas of I, You, and bodily functions like speaking, walking, etc., are there, one must accept in practice both the aspects, Nirguna and Saguna or, as they are called, the absolute and the relative, and that during that time you must remain in practice a qualified non-dualist, though you may talk of non-dualism. Many were the examples that the Master gave on that matter.

19. A few examples given by the Master:

(1) the natural and reverse orders in the scale of music

He said, "Take, for example, the natural and the reverse orders of the musical scale. You raise the pitch of your voice in the natural order of 'do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, si, do' (sa re ga ma Pa dha ni sa) and lower it in the reverse order of 'do, si, la, Sol, fa, mi, re, do'. Similarly you realize the knowledge of non-duality in Samadhi, come down again and then remain in the I-consciousness.

(2) Vilva fruit

"Again take a Vilva fruit in your hand and try to ascertain which of the three, the outer shell, seeds or the pulp, is the fruit. At first you discard the shell as not being the substance; and do the same with the seeds; and then, on isolating the pulp, say that that is the real Vilva fruit. Then comes the decision that the shell, like the seeds, belongs to what the pulp is made of—it is the shell, seeds and the pulp that together make the Vilva fruit. Similarly, after directly knowing the Absolute, comes the conclusion that that which is the Absolute, is in sport the relative, the universe."

(3) the pith of a plantain plant

"By removing the sheaths of the stem of a plantain plant, you reach the pith and think that to be the essence. Then comes the realisation that it is to the sheaths that the pith belongs and it is to the pith that the sheaths belong —it is both these together that make the stem."

(4) coats of an onion

"And just as when one goes on removing the coats of an onion nothing is left over; so, in order to ascertain the self, when one goes on eliminating the body, the mind, the intellect, etc., and makes sure that none of these is the self, one finds that there is nothing separate called 'I' but everything is He and nothing but He—It is like saying 'It is my Ganga' by putting a fence round a part of the water of the Ganga." Now to come back to our main topic again.

20. Although the state of Bhavamukha is a few steps below the Nirguna, there is a plenitude of the knowledge of the non-dual reality in that state, How one feels in that state. The Master is an example

It is needless to say that the Master dwelt in the realm of Vidya Maya (the Maya leading Godward), a few steps below the attributeless being of the divine Mother, when he was having the full knowledge of the universal I in

Bhavamukha and was seeing the manifestation of the "many" from the "One". But even in that state the manifestation and knowledge of that One is so great that the Master felt quite fully that it was He who was doing, thinking and saying whatever anyone in the world was doing, thinking and saying. Even a glimpse of this state is very wonderful. The Master said that when one day a man was walking upon grass, he was feeling very much hurt in his chest, as if it was on his chest that the man was walking. In fact, the blood in his chest coagulated to produce black marks and he was extremely fidgeting on account of pain.

21. One feels, "I am servant, devotee, child or a part", when one comes down to a still lower state of the realm of Vidya Maya mentioned above

The mood "I am the servant of the divine Mother", "I am Her devotee", "l am Her child" or "l am a part of Her" was always there in the Master's mind when he came further down to the lower state of the realm of Maya. And still further down is the realm of the Avidya Maya (the Maya leading away from God) or that of lust, anger, worldly attachment. By constant practice, his mind never descended there, or, to put it in another way, the divine Mother prevented its descent to that realm, as the Master used to say, "Mother prevents one who has taken complete refuge in Her from taking a wrong step."

22. The Master dwelt for the rest of his life in the consciousness of the universal ripe I after his unripe I had been destroyed altogether. It is in this state that the mood of the spiritual teacher was manifested in him. It is therefore not impossible that the mood of the spiritual teacher and humility should be found in the same person in different states

Therefore, it is clear that after he attained Nirvikalpa Samadhi, the limited or the unripe I in him vanished completely. And the little of I that was left over saw itself united for all eternity with the immense or the ripe I. That I sometimes used to feel that it was a part or limb of the universal I and again approaching nearer and nearer to that all-pervading I used to merge in It. It was through this process that he came to know all the ideas of

all minds. For, it is this immense I that is the source from which all the ideas of all the minds of the world spring. The Master was able to know and understand all the waves of ideas rising in all the minds of the universe, only because he could always remain identified with that all-pervading I. In that high state, the Master's mood, "l am a part of the divine Lord" also gradually vanished and the universal I or what may be called the I of the divine Mother manifested Itself through him as the spiritual teacher, possessing the power of bestowing grace and inflicting punishment. Therefore, the Master did not then appear to be the "humblest of the humble" but all his actions, such as, his movements, behaviour with others, etc., assumed a different form. He, like the mythical wish-fulfilling tree, then asked the devotee what he want. We saw the Master at Dakshineswar daily assume that mood in order to bestow his grace on especial devotees. And again we saw him in that mood on Jaunary 1, 1886. On that day he was in that mood and by his touch transmitted spirituality to or awakened the dormant spiritual power in the devotees present there. That is a wonderful story. It will not be out of place to narrate it here.

23. The Master's power of awakening spirituality in others by his mere will or touch An example—the event of January 1, 1886

It was the first day of January 1886. It was a little more than two weeks since the devotees had brought the Master, according to the advice of Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar, to the garden house of Gopal Babu, the son-in-law of Rani Katyayani, at Kasipur in the north of Calcutta. The doctor had said that the air in the garden quarters was purer than in Calcutta proper and that it was possible that the Master's disease in the throat would be cured or alleviated if he could breathe as much of pure air as could be had. It was a few days after he had come to the garden that Dr. Rajendralal Datta came to see him and administered Lycopodium 200. And it appeared that there was also a little alleviation of the disease. But since his coming there the Master had never got down from the first floor of the house to the ground floor or taken a walk in the garden. He felt much better that day and in the afternoon expressed a desire to have a walk. The devotees were therefore very happy on that day.

Swami Vivekananda was then feeling an intense detachment and had given up all desires for worldly prosperity. He was then living in the company of the Master and in order to realize the divine Lord was practising various spiritual exercises according to his instruction. He used to kindle a holy fire under a tree and pass nights in meditation, Japa, reading and other devotional exercises. A few other devotees also such as the junior Gopal, Kali and others brought the necessary articles for helping him in Sadhana and they themselves practised it according to their capacity. The lay devotees could not always remain with the Master on account of their various worldly affairs. But whenever they had an opportunity they came to the Master, made all arrangements about the food and other necessaries for those who always remained busy in the service of the Master, and sometimes stayed there for a day or so. As it was the New Year's day, offices remained closed, and many devotees came to the garden.

It was 3 p.m. Dressed in a red-bordered cloth, a shirt, a thick wrapper also with red border, a cap covering the ears and a pair of slippers, the Master came down slowly from the first floor with Swami Adbhutananda and entered the hall downstairs, observed it closely, came out of the western door and started for a walk in the garden. Some of the lay devotees saw him thus going for a walk and followed him with great joy. The young devotees like Narendra were then sleeping in the small room adjacent to the hall as they were fatigued on account of keeping vigil the previous night. When he saw that the lay devotees were going with the Master, Adbhutananda thought it unnecessary for him to go farther with the Master and returned from the southern bank of the small pond in front of the hall, called and took with him another young devotee and both busied themselves in sweeping and cleaning the Master's room upstairs and sunning the Master's bedding and clothings.

Of all the lay devotees, Girish was then feeling the greatest attachment to God. At one time the Master highly praised his wonderful faith and said to other devotees, "Girish has more than a hundred per cent faith. People will hereafter be surprised to see his spiritual progress." On account of the great surge of faith and devotion Girish always looked upon the Master as the divine Lord Himself, incarnated through His grace to liberate souls from the bondage of the world and, although forbidden by the Master, he expressed

publicly that conviction of his, to one and all. Girish was also present in the garden on that day, and was sitting and conversing under a mango tree with Ram and a few other lay devotees.

Surrounded by the devotees, the Master was slowly proceeding by the broad path in the garden towards the gate and came to the middle of that path near the mango tree where he saw Ram and Girish under its shade. He then addressed Girish and said, "Girish, what have you seen (in me) on account of which you say publicly so many things (that I am an incarnation and so on) to one and all?"

Although Girish was so abruptly questioned, his faith remained unshaken. Hurriedly and with overflowing adoration he stood up, came to the path, knelt down at the feet of the Master and with folded hands said in a choked voice, "What more can I say about Him whose glory even Vyasa and Valmiki (in their immortal epics and Puranas) failed miserably to express, even a fraction of it."

Hearing Girish's words of such wonderful faith, the Master had horripilation all over the body, his mind ascended to a high plane and he was in Samadhi. Then seeing the Master's face illumined with a divine halo, Girish cried out in great joy, "Glory to Ramakrishna, glory to Ramakrishna", and took the dust of his feet again and again.

In the meanwhile in a state of divine semi-consciousness the Master looked at all present and said smilingly, "What more shall I say to you? May all of you be spiritually awakened." When the devotees heard those words of blessing destroying their fear of the world, they raised with great joy repeated cries of "Glory to Ramakrishna". Some of them saluted him, some showered flowers, some again came and touched his feet. No sooner had the first devotee touched his feet and stood up than the Master in that state of divine semi-consciousness touched the devotee's breast and, passing his hand in the upward direction, said, "Awake". As soon as the second person came and saluted him and stood up, he did the same thing to him; so also to the third and to the fourth. In this way he touched one after another, all of those who approached him thus. And there arose by that marvellous touch a wonderful mood in the mind of each; some of them began to laugh, some to weep, some to meditate, and some again to call aloud all others in order that they might also be blessed by receiving the grace of the Master,

the sea of gratuitous mercy, and share the bliss that was overflowing. The noise and cries were so great that some of the devotees who afterwards became monks got up from their sleep and others gave up the work they were engaged in. They came running and saw that all the devotees stood surrounding the Master and were behaving like madmen, on the path in the garden. And as soon as they saw it, they knew that it was the same divine play of the Master, which, under the influence of the divine mood, he had enacted for his especial devotees at Dakshineswar in order to bestow grace on them, that was now being manifested and enacted for the good of all on that occasion, so that all might receive divine grace. Hardly had the devotees who were monks-in-the-making come when that state of the Master changed and he was in normal condition again.

24. What visions and experiences the devotees had at the touch of the Master

It was known on enquiry that the devotees had wonderful experiences and visions. One felt bliss, and a sort of intoxication such as is produced by smoking hemp; another, an unknown power creeping up within his body with accompanying bliss; others saw ecstatic visions the moment they shut their eyes: one of light, another of the shining form of God he had been meditating upon but had not been able to see—all hitherto unseen, unheard of and unfelt experiences! It was, however, clear that although each had a different vision and experience, the feeling of being filled with an extraordinary divine bliss was common to all. More than this, each felt that the extraordinary mental change or experience was brought about by the transmission of a superhuman power by the Master. There were only two of the devotees present whom the Master did not touch, saying “not now”. And it was those two only that considered themselves unfortunate and felt dejected on that happy occasion.[1]

25. One never knew when the Master would mercifully touch any one that way

Another fact stands out from this, that it was not at all certain when that divine Power would graciously manifest Itself through the Master to any one. It is also doubtful whether the Master himself could have known or understood this, his normal consciousness.

26. It is recorded in all the scriptures that on the merging or destruction of the “unripe” I, the mood of the spiritual Teacher is manifested

But it is important to note that the Master could become a great instrument of the universal I or the divine Mother in manifesting power, only because he could give up completely the unripe or limited I. And that wonderful manifestation through him of the aspect of the divine Mother as the spiritual teacher of the people and of the world became a fact because he completely gave up that unripe I and converted himself into the humblest of the humble. The history of the religions of the world is an eternal witness to the fact that it was only by the merging of the limited I-ness in this way that the mood or the power of the spiritual teacher became manifest in the lives of all incarnations of all religions.

27. The mood of the Guru is not anything human, but the power of the divine Mother Herself manifesting through the human body and mind as instruments

28. God, out of compassion, removes ignorance and delusion of the human mind through spiritual teacher. Therefore, devotion to the spiritual tea-cher and that to God are the same.

29. The Master’s instruction regarding the devotion to the spiritual teacher: the story of Vibhishana’s devotion to his Guru

30. When there is true devotion, one remembers God through the association of even a trifling thing. Sri Chaitanya had ecstasy immediately on saying, “Ah, drums are made of this earth

We have been hearing it from time immemorial that one cannot realize spirituality or God if one has the belief that the spiral teacher is a mere human being. We have always been repeating with or without faith the hymn, “The spiritual teacher is Brahma, the spiritual teacher is Vishnu, the spiritual teacher is the divine Maheswara” with reference to the teacher who initiates us in Mantras. Many who, under the spell of a foreign education, gave up their own national culture and education, which are based on religion, regarded it to be a great sin to use such words with reference to a particular human being and were not slow to indulge in noisy controversy. For, who then knew that though It manifested Itself through the personalities of some human beings, the mood of the spiritual teacher was not anything within the realm of human consciousness? Who then knew that it was the divine Mother who had manifested Herself fully in the mood or power of a spiritual teacher through his body and mind, made wholly pure, awakened and free, from the tinge of egoism, for the purpose of bestowing peace by the removal of the three kinds of miseries[1] that were continually scorching, like fires, the human minds bound tightly by the chains of Maya; even as She manifested Herself as water, air, food and other material articles, for the up-keep and maintenance of the bodies of all beings? And who then knew that one became the instrument for the manifestation of that mood or power in exact proportion to one’s capacity to give up one’s egoism or the unripe I? Ordinarily a very little, a drop or two, so to speak, of this divine power is manifest in the minds of persons “liberated in life”; this is why it eludes our understanding. But when, through an abundance of good fortune, one witnesses the wonderful Lila of that divine power in Krishna, Buddha, Chaitanya, Sankara, Jesus and other incarnations of the past and in Ramakrishna in the present age, one feels in one’s heart of hearts that such manifestation of power does not belong to any mortal man but to God Himself. Then alone do the scales of dross and delusion fall off from the eyes of those who suffer from this world-disease and seek the Truth wrongly; then they cry out in an outburst of joy, “O Master, thou never art a man—thou art He.” Therefore we see that the universal Mother who manifested Herself as the exalted divine power, removing all kinds of impurities due to spiritual ignorance from the human mind, is what is called the mood or power of the spiritual teacher (the Guru-bhava or the Guru-

sakti). It is this divine power (Sakti) which the scriptures speak of as the spiritual teacher and call upon man to pour out his heart's faith, reverence and adoration at Her feet. But the human mind that is conversant with the gross world only and is just learning the first lesson in devotion and reverence cannot of course love a bodiless intangible power; and it is for this reason that the scriptures advise us to look upon the person who initiates us into this life divine as the Guru and to have a devotion for his personality which is induced by the real divine Guru. Therefore, to those who say that they may have reverence and adoration for the power manifesting as the spiritual teacher but that they refuse to bow their heads in reverence and devotion to the body through which that power manifests itself—to those, thus making a distinction between the power and the medium of its manifestation— our reply is a grave warning that they should not fall a prey to self-deception by discriminating between the unseen power and its seen medium of manifestation and by paying homage to the unseen to the neglect of the seen. The difference itself is as difficult as that between fire and its burning power; and as to the act of adoration of the unseen and the unknown the least said the best How can one of the two be adored and the other rejected? A man who loves or admires somebody feels special attachment for even a trifling thing used by his beloved. He considers even a flower touched by him or a piece of cloth worn or a small thing used by-him as sacred. The very ground he treads is regarded by him to be very dear and precious. Does it need to be explained that he will have a natural reverence for the body through which he accepts his worship and bestows grace on him? Those who say so do not understand at all what is meant by the mood of the spiritual teacher. Again, one who has true devotion to that power cannot but have devotion to the body, the receptacle of that power. The Master used to illustrate this point by citing the example of Vibhishana. He said, "At one time, long after Sri Ramachandra passed away, a boat sank and a man was thrown by the waves on the coast of Lanka. Vibhishana is immortal and has been ruling over Lanka through the three cycles of time, since Ravana's death.[1] The news reached him. The mouths of many of the Rakshasas in the assembly began to water at the news of the coming of a dainty morsel, the human body. But this brought about an extraordinary mood in Vibhishana, the king. He began to say again

and again with tears in his eyes, and voice choked with devotion, ‘O the luck! O the accumulation of good fortunes!’ The Rakshasas could not understand his feeling and were dumb-founded. Vibhishana then explained, ‘Is it a matter of little fortune that after a very long time I shall get today the opportunity of seeing a human body such as the one in which my Ramachandra set His foot on Lanka and blessed me? It seems to me that Ramachandra Himself is coming in that manner.’ Saying so, the king came to the coast with all his ministers, courtiers and other nobles and took the man to the palace with great love and reverence. Then the king seated him on the throne and together with his family began to serve and worship him like an obedient servant. He kept him there at Lanka for sometime, made presents of jewels and other precious articles, bade him good-bye and sent him home escorted by his servants.” Finishing the story, the Master remarked, “This happens when there is true devotion. One then remembers God through the association of even a trifling thing and becomes filled with love and devotion, Haven’t you heard that Sri Chaitanya was in ecstasy saying, ‘Drums are made of this earth’. One day, while he was passing through a certain place, he was told that the people of that village maintained themselves by making and selling the drums that were played at the time of singing the Lord’s name. As soon as he heard it he exclaimed, ‘Ah, drums are made of this earth!’ and saying so he immediately passed into ecstasy and lost normal consciousness. For, there was the association: Of this earth drums are made, the drums are played at the time of singing the name of Hari, that Hari is the life of the lives of all, more beautiful than the most. All these thoughts at once passed through his mind, which became completely concentrated in Hari. A man who has such devotion to his Guru cannot but remember him through association, not only when he sees his relatives but also when he sees an ordinary man of the Guru’s native village; and out of his respect for the Guru he salutes the villager, takes the dust of his feet, feeds him, and serves him in every other way. When this state is reached, one does not see any shortcomings in one’s spiritual teacher. Then the truth of the proverb, ‘My spiritual teacher is Nityananda[1] even if he frequents a tavern’ applies to him; otherwise a human being cannot but have good and bad qualities. But just as everything looks yellow to a jaundiced eye, so he, owing to his overflowing devotion to the Lord,

sees God and not man in the Guru. His devotion then shows him that it is God who has become the whole universe. It is He alone who has become the spiritual teacher, father, mother, man, cattle, everything, sentient or insentient."

31. Arjuna's devotion to the spiritual teacher

One day at Dakshineswar, an arrogant but sincere young devotee[2] was raising objections against what the Master was telling him. He continued arguing even when the Master had repeated his statement several times, at which he gave him a mild rebuke and said, "What sort of a man are you? I say it again and again and you don't accept it." The heart of the young man was touched and he said, "When you say it, I accept it of course. It was for the sake of argument that I spoke thus." On hearing it the Master smilingly said with an expression of delight in his face, "Do you know what devotion to the spiritual teacher is like? One is certain to perceive immediately whatever the spiritual teacher mentions. Arjuna had that devotion. One day while driving with Arjuna in a chariot Krishna looked at the sky and said, 'See, friend, how beautiful is the flock of pigeons flying there!' Arjuna saw it and immediately said, 'Yes, friend, very beautiful pigeons indeed.' The very next moment Sri Krishna looked again and said, 'How strange, friend! They are by no means pigeons.' Arjuna saw them and said,' Quite so, friend, they are not pigeons at all.' Now try to understand the matter; Arjuna's truthfulness was unquestionable, he never could have flattered Krishna when he said so. But he had such great devotion to him and faith in his words that he actually saw with his eyes whatever Krishna described to him, right or wrong."

32. Although, as the power of God, all spiritual teachers are one, absolute faith in and unwavering devotion to one's own spiritual teacher are necessary. What Hanuman said about it

If, as the scriptures point out, the spiritual teacher's power to remove the darkness of ignorance is understood in the manner spoken of above, viz., to be a particular power of God, another fact must simultaneously be admitted

to be true. And that is this: the spiritual teacher is one and not many. Although the receptacles of this power or the bodies through which it is manifested are different, your spiritual teacher and mine are not different but one only, that one being none else but that power. As an example of this may be quoted the story in the *Mahabharata* of Ekalavya, who accepted as his teacher an earthen statue of Dronacharya and worshipped him in it with devotion and thereby acquired proficiency in archery. Reasonable as this fact is, it requires a great deal of time and Sadhana for a man to accept it whole-heartedly; and when once he accepts it, he has no alternative but to worship the spiritual teacher in the body through which that divine Power has bestowed grace on him. The Master used to tell us, as an instance of this, what Hanuman, a bright example of steadfast devotion, said. The Master said, "At one time during the battle of Lanka, Ramachandra and Lakshmana were bound with a noose made of snakes by the great hero Meghanada. Then they remembered Garuda, the eternal enemy of the race of snakes, and called him there. As soon as the snakes saw Garuda, they became frightened and fled in whatever directions they could. Pleased with his devotee Garuda, Ramachandra appeared before him in the form of Vishnu, who was the eternal object of worship of Garuda, and explained to him that Vishnu had thus incarnated Himself as Rama. But Hanuman did not like to see Ramachandra assume the form of Vishnu; and the only thought he had in his mind was how soon he would re-assume the form of Rama. Ramachandra did not take long to know that sentiment of Hanuman. Immediately after bidding good-bye to Garuda he assumed the form of Rama and asked Hanuman, 'Why were you restless, my child, to see me in the form of Vishnu? You are possessed of the great knowledge absolute and it is of course not beyond your knowledge and understanding that one who is Rama is Vishnu'. Hanuman replied humbly, 'It is true that the same supreme Self has assumed both the forms and therefore there is no difference between the consort of Sri (i.e., Vishnu) and that of Janaki (i.e., Rama); but my mind is always anxious to see the feet of the lotus-eyed consort of Janaki only, he is my all in all. It is through that form that I saw the manifestation of the divine Lord and have my life's aim fulfilled'."

33. The power of the spiritual teacher is there, lying dormant, in all men

Thus it is evident that the power of the spiritual teacher is a power of the universal Mother and that power is either lying dormant or is awake in all men. This is why the aspirant highly devoted to the spiritual teacher, reaches at last a spiritual state when that power manifesting through the aspirant himself goes on explaining to him the hidden complex truths of spirituality. The aspirant has then no more need to ask any outside agent to have any doubt removed. The divine Lord said to Arjuna in the Gita[1]: "When your intellect is freed from the delusion due to ignorance there will be no necessity on your part to have anything to do with the teachings of the scriptures, such as 'this should be heard', 'that is in the scriptures' and so on; you will go beyond all this and will be able to understand everything yourself." Such is the state the aspirant attains then.

34. The Master's words— "The mind becomes the spiritual teacher at last"

The Master said with reference to this state, "It is the mind that becomes at last the spiritual teacher and acts as such, 'A human teacher imparts a Mantra to the ear; the divine Teacher imparts it to the soul.' " But there is a gulf of difference between that mind and this. At that time the mind assumes the nature of pure Sattva and gets purified and so becomes a conduit for manifesting the higher power of God; but at this time it wants to be engrossed in the enjoyment of pleasures, in lust, anger, etc., by turning away from God.

35. "The spiritual teacher is, as it were, a woman friend"

The Master used to say, "The spiritual teacher is, as it were, a woman-friend; until Radha is united with Krishna, there is no end to her love-errands. Even so, as long as the Sadhaka is not united with the chosen Ideal, the work of the spiritual teacher does not come to an end." It is thus that the supremely glorious spiritual teacher takes hold of the hand of the disciple, who is burning to know the truth, ascends to higher and higher regions of spirituality and bringing him at last before his chosen Ideal, says, 'Boy, look there!' and disappears at once."

36. “The spiritual teacher merges at last in the chosen Ideal of the disciple. The three — Guru, Krishna and Vaishnava are One, and the One is the three”

Hearing the Master say so, one day a devotee thought, “Then some day the separation from the spiritual teacher is inevitable” and with a painful heart he asked, “Sir, where does he go then?” The Master said in reply, “The teacher then merges in the chosen Ideal. The three viz., the teacher, Krishna (the chosen Ideal) and Vaishnava (the devotee) are One, and the One is the three.”

Footnote

1. It was a fact that a sort of overpowering feeling like the intoxication produced by smoking too much hemp was felt at that time. We have seen some reeling. In the Master’s case it was so much that it beggars description. Under the overpowering feeling of that intoxication he reeled so much that he had to take hold of some one of us in order to be able to walk at that time. People thought that he had taken too much of intoxicants.

1. i.e., misery pertaining to the body, that caused by other animals and that due to the unusual effects of natural powers e.g., lightning, flood, storm, earthquake, etc.

1. II. 1. 2-7—Tr.

2. II. 15. 21—Tr.

1. IV. 4. 13.—Tr.

1. Against a probable misunderstanding of this passage the reader is referred to III. 2. 5. and III. 2. 16.—Tr.

1. Afterwards the Master touched these two also that way.

1. f. n. on III. 3. 3.

1. This refers to the main story of the *Ramayana*.—Tr.

1. i.e., the divine Lord who is of the nature of eternal bliss.

2. Vaikunthanath Sanyal.

1. *Gita* II. 52.

CHAPTER IV
THE FIRST MANIFESTATION OF THE MOOD OF THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER

> Ignorant of My supreme nature as the great Lord of all beings, foolish people slight Me who am in a human body.
>
> — *Gita,* IX. 11.

We find the mood of the spiritual teacher manifested in the Master from his childhood, though, it must be admitted, that its full manifestation took place in his youth when he attained the Nirvikalpa Samadhi. Let no one think that the above statement is an exaggeration of fact, intended to extol the Master's greatness. If anybody critically studies the Master's life without any bias he will see that he will never be tempted to entertain that error. Let anybody study, as much as it lies in his power, the events of this extraordinary life, and he will after all find that it is his power of judgment itself that gets baffled, bewildered and benumbed. Our own minds were not a little suspicious. Many of us doubted, tested and examined the Master more critically than it will perhaps even occur to many in the present age. It is difficult to enumerate the occasions when most of us, doubting the Master, went to test him and got defeated and hung our heads in shame. We have given the reader a little indication of this already in the second chapter and much will have to be given later. The reader then will be in a position to judge for himself.

1. "Fruits first, flowers next." This is the peculiar trait of all divine incarnations

The Master always used to quote in connection with the lives of the eternally free Isvarakotis the saying, “Fruits first, flowers next, as is the case with the creepers called gourds.” The meaning of the saying is that whatever practice they are seen to undertake for achieving perfection in matters spiritual, is for the purpose of showing people that they will have to undertake similar practices in order to achieve similar results. From a critical study of the lives of these persons one fact stands out. It is this, that from their childhood they behave in every matter in a way which is possible only for those who are already in full possession of the knowledge for the acquisition of which they seem to work so hard. It is as if the knowledge is already theirs from the very commencement of their lives. When this holds good even in the case of Isvarakotis, it is superfluous to say that it applies to the divine incarnations. The manifestation of such knowledge in them is seen throughout their lives—so is it written in the scriptures. And it is also seen that there is a great similarity between many of the actions of the incarnations of different ages. We find, for example, the fact of transmitting spirituality to others by a touch in the lives of every one of them—Jesus, Sri Chaitanya and Sri Ramakrishna. Similarly, we find many other events of like nature in their lives. Some particularly holy men were informed in a superhuman way of the advent of these incarnations. The mood of the spiritual teacher was manifest in them from their childhood. They knew from their boyhood that they had come down on earth, out of compassion, as incarnations in order to show especial paths to the people in general. There are many other facts as well. Therefore, no one should be surprised to hear that the mood of the spiritual teacher was manifest in the Master’s life from his childhood. The incarnations are a class by themselves. One will fall into a great error if one thinks that, because such events cannot happen in the lives of ordinary men, they cannot occur in the lives of incarnations also.

2. The first manifestation of the mood of the spiritual teacher in the Master’s life. A discussion on the scriptures in a meeting of Pandits at the house of the Lahas at Kamarpukur

We find a very clear instance of the first manifestation of the mood of the spiritual teacher in the life of the Master at Kamarpukur. He had then been invested with the sacred thread and he must have been about nine or ten years of age. The well-known scholars of that part of the country were invited on the occasion of a Sraddha ceremony to the house of the Lahas, the landlords of the village. And, as is usual, when many scholars came together there started a heated - controversy amongst them. When no decision on a particular disputed point in the scriptures could be arrived at, the boy Gadadhar said to a scholar known to him, “Can’t the point at issue be decided this way?” Many boys of the village came to the meeting out of curiosity and they could not understand even a little of the meaning of the noisy controversy accompanied by the gesticulations of the scholars. Some of these boys took all this as a huge joke and were laughing, some others were mimicking the gestures of the scholars and were making a loud noise, while others were completely indifferent to it and engaged themselves in playing. Therefore, this scholar was not a little surprised to see that that wonderful boy had listened with patience to what they had said, understood everything and arrived at the right conclusion by reflecting on the matter. He then told the others known to him about Gadadhar’s conclusion. Knowing that it was the only possible solution regarding the disputed point, they explained it to all others. All then admitted unanimously that it was the only rational solution regarding the point at dispute and were looking for the person whose keen intellect was the first to see that wonderful solution, and when they came to know that it was the boy Gadadhar who had said it, some of them became astounded and, thinking the boy to be possessed of divine powers, remained gazing steadfastly at him; while others filled with joy, took him in their laps and blessed him.

3. A similar event in the life of Jesus in the temple of Jehovah at Jerusalem

4. The Jewish pilgrimage of those days

5. Jesus explained the scriptures in the temple of Jehovah

It is necessary to discuss the subject a little more. There is an event recorded in the Bible,[1] exactly similar to this, in the life of Jesus, an incarnation of the divine Lord and the founder of the Christian religion. He was then twelve years of age. His poor, God-fearing father Joseph and mother Mary started that year on foot with him in the company of other pilgrims from his native village of Nazareth in the province of Galilee in order to pay a visit to the deity in the famous temple at Jerusalem and offer worship, sacrifice, etc. there. This place of pilgrimage of the Jews was like the pilgrim centres of the Hindus. Here the devout aspirant felt blessed by directly experiencing the manifestation of Jehovah in the gold casket and worshipped the deity by burning incense on an altar before him and by offering leaves and flowers, fruits and roots and by sacrificing beasts and birds like sheep, pigeons, etc. The sacrificing of pigeons and other birds in the Hindu places of pilgrimage like Kamakhya and Vindhyavasini is in vogue even today. Worship, offering and sacrifices being over, Joseph and Mary started with their companions towards their village. At that time the condition of the pilgrims coming from various quarters to visit Jerusalem was to a certain extent similar to that of those proceeding on foot to Puri and other places of pilgrimage before railways had been laid. That long narrow path beautified here and there by trees, wells, ponds; those places of rest called inns—it is said there was also no lack of charitable guest-houses — those guide-priests, the inevitable companions of pilgrims, those grocers' shops where the necessary provisions were available; that dust; those swarms of mosquitoes which rendered a friendly service to the pilgrims by preventing their forgetting their religious thoughts in sleep and idleness; that undertaking of journeys by pilgrims in great numbers so as to be of help to one another against robbers and thieves; and, last, that simple faith and dependence on God;—all were there. When Jesus' parents found that he was not with them they thought that he was perhaps coming behind the party with some other pilgrim boys. But even after travelling a long distance, when they found Jesus not coming up, they were greatly perturbed; and when a thorough search in the big party revealed that he was not with them, they anxiously turned their steps towards Jerusalem again. They looked for him in various places there, but could get no information about him. At last they entered the temple in search of him and found that

the boy Jesus was sitting and discussing the scriptures among the Sadhakas well versed in them and was charming all by his lucid, inspired explanations of the complicated points of dispute which confounded even the scholars.

6. The refutation of the opinion of the great orient-alist and scholar Max Muller

The great scholar Max Muller has expressed a doubt in his *Life and Sayings of Ramakrishna* about the truth of the incident in the Master's life just stated above on the ground of its great similarity with the corresponding incident in the life of the Lord Jesus just mentioned. He has not even shrunk from passing the uncharitable remark that the English-knowing disciples of Sri Ramakrishna have introduced the story of Jesus' childhood into the life of their Master in order to heighten the latter's greatness. Although the scholar has thus displayed his keen intellect, we are helpless, and prefer not to dilate, upon it further, for we have heard of that event of the Master's childhood from many old people of his birth place Kamarpukur; and also from the Master himself on several occasions.

7. Why did the Master marry?

(1) at the request of relatives? No

When studying the Master's life, one is confronted with the question, why did he marry? Why did a person who was never inclined to have any carnal relationship with his wife, marry at all? It is of course difficult to find the reason.

To the suggestion that his relatives married him against his will when, on reaching youth, he became almost mad owing to his constant thinking of God, we reply, it is silly to entertain such an idea. From his childhood no one could get anything done by him against his will, on how ever trivial a matter. Again, whenever he wanted to do anything, he never failed to accomplish it by some means or other. Take, for instance, his having for his Bhikshamata a blacksmith woman named Dhani, at the time of his

investiture with the sacred thread. Social rules and regulations were not observed in the villages with as much laxity as in Calcutta; so no one could act according to his own sweet will in the villages. The Master's parents also were not a little orthodox and it was the custom of the family too to assign the duty of the Bhiksha-mata to a Brahmin, lady and all the superiors of the family of the boy Gadadhar were against his receiving Bhiksha from a blacksmith woman. In spite of all these, opposition melted away before Gadadhar's insistence, and Dhani became the Bhiksha-mata. This was a matter for no small surprise. Thus it was with all matters. The Master's will and words ever prevailed against the wills and desires of others. How then can we say that in such an important event in his life he merely acquiesced in the mere desires and requests of his relatives?

(2) for enjoyment? No

(3) what the Master said when his relatives were in search of a bride. "Go and see, the bride is marked with a straw." Therefore his marriage was voluntary

(4) for experiencing the result of his actions done in previous births that had begun to fructify? No

(a) a man of absolute knowledge is free to experience his Prarabdha or not

It might again be said, "What is the necessity of admitting that the Master had the idea of renouncing everything out of love of God from his very childhood? We can say instead that the Master at first had the desire to marry and enjoy worldly pleasures like people in general, but that no sooner had he attained maturity than there came about a sudden revolutionary change in his mind and a violent storm of detachment from the world and attachment to God raged in his heart, which overturned all his previous plans and desires. In that case all objections will be removed in a natural way. All objections are removed if it be said that the Master's marriage took place before that storm began to rage." We say that although this

explanation is plausible, there are some irrefutable objections against this attitude. Firstly, the Master was married at the age of twenty-four; the storm of renunciation was then furiously raging in his heart. And it is quite unlikely that a person like him, who hesitated all his life to give the slightest trouble to anyone for his own sake, should have proceeded thoughtlessly to do an act which he knew full well would be the cause of lifelong suffering for a lady. Secondly, the more we think the more can we understand that no act in the Master's life was done without a purpose. Thirdly, it is quite certain that he married willingly; for he told his nephew, Hriday, and all the members of family when they were in search of a bride that it had already been divinely settled that he should be married to the daughter of Ramchandra Mukhopadhyaya of the village of Jayramvati. The reader will either be surprised to hear this or will disbelieve it and say, "Fancy, speaking of such incredible things! Can these statements be accepted in the twentieth century?" We have to say in reply, "Whether you believe it or not, it was indeed a fact. There are many still living who will bear it out. Why don't you just investigate?" When in their search for a bride his relatives failed to get one, the Master himself said, "Go and see; such and such a girl of such and such a village has been marked with a straw"[1] for the purpose. Therefore it is clear that the Master knew that he would be married; what was more, he knew also the place of marriage and the person to whose daughter he would be married. And he did not raise any objection to that. It was of course during his Bhavasamadhi that he had come to know it. What then is the meaning of the Master's marriage? Some reader, well versed in the scriptures, will perhaps be annoyed and say, "How silly, you are raising a storm in a tea-cup. First consult some scriptures and other books and then venture to record the events of the lives of great pious souls. Scriptures say that actions accumulated in previous lives that are yet to bear fruit (Sanchita[2]) and those that are done after the attainment of the knowledge of Brahman (Agami[2] *)* are all destroyed, when God-vision or perfect knowledge is attained. But the results of the works done in the previous births that are already bearing fruit (Prarabdha[2]) have to be experienced in this life even when the knowledge of Brahman is achieved. Suppose there are some arrows in a quiver tied to the back of a fowler. He has taken in hand one arrow in order to shoot. He shot one a little before at a bird on a

tree. Just at this moment there arises sudden compassion in the mind of the fowler and he resolves he will no more injure any living being. He throws away the arrow in his hand and also the arrows on his back. But can he withdraw the arrow he has already shot at the bird? The arrows on his back are, as it were, his actions accumulated (Sanchita) in past lives; the arrow in his hand represents future (Agami) acts which he is yet to do in this life. But these kinds of acts are destroyed on the acquisition of knowledge. But his Prarabdha acts are like the arrow he has already discharged; its result he has to experience. Great souls like Sri Ramakrishna experience the results of their Prarabdha actions only while conscious in a body. The experiencing of these results is inevitable; and they know and understand what kinds of events will happen in their lives according to their Prarabdha acts. Therefore, it was not extraordinary for Sri Ramakrishna to mention where and to whom his own marriage would take place." In reply to the above objection we say that we are really quite unlearned in the scriptures. But so far as we know, we can say that a man of right knowledge has not got to experience even the results of his Prarabdha actions. For he has dedicated to God for ever the mind which feels pain and pleasure. Where then is the possibility in his mind of experiencing pain and pleasure? But if you say that Prarabdha actions are experienced in his body, how is even that possible? If he by his own will keeps a little of I-ness for some reason or other, as for instance doing good to others, he becomes conscious of his mind and body again and simultaneously experiences the results of his Prarabdha actions. Therefore, men of right knowledge can experience or abstain from experiencing at will the results of those actions; such is the power they attain. That is why they are called "the conquerors of the worlds", "the conquerors of death", "all-knowing" and so on.

(b) the case of the Master needs no mention; for his words are, "One who was Rama and Krishna is now Ramakrishna"

Again, if we are to believe the experience of Sri Ramakrishna himself, he cannot even be classed amongst the ordinary men of absolute knowledge. For, we have heard him say again and again, "One who was Rama and Krishna is now Ramakrishna"; that is, He who incarnated Himself as Rama

and Krishna in past ages is present in the form of Sri Ramakrishna and is manifesting wonderful divine sport. If one is to believe this, one must admit that he is an incarnation of God, eternally pure, eternally awakened and eternally free. And when one admits that, one cannot say that he is under the control of Prarabdha. Therefore, we are to take a different decision about the Master's marriage, which we give below:

(c) the Master's joking about his marriage

The Master talked to us on the topic of his marriage on several occasions and joked about it. That was also very sweet. One day at Dakshineswar he sat down to take his food and Balaram Basu and a few other devotees sat and conversed with him. That day the Holy Mother had started for Kamarpukur for a stay of a few months, for it was the occasion of the marriage of the Master's nephew Ramlal.

The Master: (To Balaram) "Well, just tell me why marriage for me? What was the need for a wife? Why a wife for one who does not know where the cloth he is wearing is?" Balaram smiled and kept silent.

The Master: "Oh, I see; (taking up a little vegetable from the plate and showing it to Balaram) it is for this there was marriage, otherwise who would cook for me this way? (Balaram and the other devotees laughed). Really, who would have cared to see how I took my food? They went away today,—(the devotees did not understand who went)—Ramlal's aunt; do you understand? Ramlal is going to be married, so they have all gone to Kamarpukur. I stood and looked on, and felt nothing. Really it was as if just someone went. But afterwards there was some anxiety as to who would cook for me. Don't you see? All kinds of food do not agree with my stomach, and sometimes there is not consciousness enough to take food. She (the Holy Mother) knows what kinds of food suit me; she makes this or that preparation; that's why the anxiety arose as to who would do it."

(d) for completing the ten sanctifying ceremonies which the ordinary religious teacher must undergo to have the fullest experience of the world? No

Raising the topic of his marriage, one day at Dakshineswar the Master said, “Do you know why one has to marry? There are ten kinds of sanctifying ceremonies for a Brahmin’s body, and marriage is one of them. It is only when one has performed all of them that one can become a religious teacher.” He used to say again, “One who becomes a man of perfect knowledge (Paramahamsa) has finished experiencing all states, from those of the scavengers and sweepers to those of kings and emperors. How otherwise could true dispassion come? The mind will feel eager to experience that which it has not experienced and will become restless; do you understand? A piece has to move through all the squares before it reaches ‘the home’. Have you not seen it at the time of play?[1] It is similar.”

8. The purpose of the Hindu marriage is to lead man through enjoyments not incompatible with religion to renunciation

9. Experiences with discrimination lead at the right moment to the knowledge, “Pleasure comes with a crown of thorns on its head”

10. The Master taught how to urge the mind to give up the pleasure of worldly enjoyments

Although the Master stated this as the reason for the marriage of an ordinary teacher of religion, we shall now explain the special reason for the Master’s marriage, as we have understood it. The scriptures teach us at every step that the purpose of marriage is not enjoyment. To observe the rule of maintaining the creation of God and produce virtuous children and thereby do good to society should be the purpose of the Hindu marriage. The scriptures tell us this again and again. Will the Hindu then have no self-interest in his marriage? Do the scriptures teach such absurd things? No, they do not. The authors of the scriptures saw everything down to the innermost stratum of the character of weak human beings and knew that they do not care for anything in the world except self-interest and that they are not ready to undertake anything without calculating profit and loss. The authors of the scriptures taught what was mentioned above with the full knowledge of what they were doing; for they also knew that it would be for

the good of the people if they could keep that self-interest always hitched to a high motive. Men would otherwise be entangled in the bondage of births and deaths and suffer endless pain. Man runs, after the sensuous enjoyments of sight, taste, etc., of the world and thinks them to be very pleasing and very beautiful, only because he has forgotten his own nature, which is eternally free. But, ah, how few people can ascertain that all pleasure is connected for ever with pain and that if one wants to enjoy pleasure, one will have to be simultaneously ready to suffer pain also. Swami Vivekananda used to say, "Pleasure comes to people with a crown of thorns on its head." People who are busy enjoying pleasure only have no leisure to think that it has a crown of thorns on its head and that they will have to be ready to hug pain also if they welcome pleasure as their own. Therefore the scriptures remind them of this fact and say, "Children, why do you consider the attainment of pleasure to be your interest? If pleasure is accepted, pain also has to be welcomed. Why do you not turn your self-interest to a higher account and think that both pleasure and pain are your teachers and that true self-interest or the aim of life is to be delivered for all eternity from both of them?" The aim of the authors of the scriptures is evidently to harness discrimination between good and evil, the permanent and the impermanent, etc., with the enjoyments of the married life, and by making man go round the inevitable experiences of pain and pleasure, to lead him on to a thorough dispassion for the seeming, momentary pleasures of the world; so that he may be filled with a genuine love of God and go forward with, great eagerness to be blessed with His vision, taking Him to be the essence of all essences. There is no doubt about the fact that the mind will give up what it enjoys with discrimination. This is why the Master said, "Children, the discrimination between the real and the unreal is very necessary. One should always have discrimination and say to one's mind, You, mind, are eager to enjoy many things—to eat this, to put on that—but discriminate and see that the five elements out of which potatoes, rice, pulses, etc., are made, are also the ingredients of Sandesh, Rasagolla and other delicious sweets. Again, the bodies of yourself and all other persons, as also of the animals such as a cow, a goat and a sheep, are made of the very bones, flesh, blood and marrow derived from the five elements of which the beautiful bodies of women are made. Why then do you crave and die for them? They by no means will lead you to the realization of God, the

Existence-Knowledge-Bliss.' If the mind cannot desist from them then they should be enjoyed once or twice with due discrimination, and then finally renounced. Take this example: the mind persists in the desire to eat Rasagolla and by no means obeys the reins; all your discrimination is, as it were, being washed off; then bring some Rasagollas, put them into your mouth, and say to the mind when masticating and eating them and moving them from side to side inside the mouth, 'Mind, this is what is called Rasagolla; this is also made of a combination of the five elements of which potatoes and Patols are made. This also, when eaten, will be converted into blood, flesh, faeces and urine within the body; it is sweet as long as it is in the mouth; you will not feel the taste when it goes below the throat; again, if you eat too much of it you will fall ill; and you are so intensely hankering after such a thing! Fie upon you. Now that you have taken it, don't want to eat it again.' (Looking at the devotees who were to renounce the world) It is only with regard to small matters that one can give them up after enjoying them with discrimination; but with regard to big things this is not possible. One gets entangled as soon as one begins to indulge in their enjoyment. That is why such desires should be driven away from the mind by discriminating and finding out their defects."

11. The present national degradation of the Hindus is due to the non-observance of continence in married life

Oh, how few are the people who entertain that high idea in their minds at the present time, though the scriptures speak of it in glowing terms! How few are those who make themselves and society blessed by observing continence in married life according to capacity! How few are the wives who stand by the side of their husbands, urging them to undertake this high vow beneficent to the people, let alone speaking of the realization of God! How few are the husbands, again, who know so much as that the aim of life is renunciation and teach it to their wives! Alas, India, just try to think and see into what a spineless beast you have been converted by the doctrine of Western materialism which regards worldly enjoyments as the be-all and end-all of life, and which has entered into your very marrow! Was it without any reason that Sri Ramakrishna said to his world-renouncing devotees,

pointing out to them the defects in modern married life, “Ah, (if it is wrong to make the enjoyment of worldly objects the *summum bonum* of life, then) do you think simply throwing a few flowers[1] at the time of marriage will make it pure or free from all blemishes?” It is indeed doubtful whether indulgence in sensual pleasure in married life was ever so excessive as it is now in India. At the present time we have almost forgotten that, besides the satisfaction of the senses, there is a very sacred and high purpose of marriage and this is why we are reducing ourselves to beings worse than beasts. It is only in order to destroy this beastliness of men and women of modern India that the Master, the teacher of the people, was married. Like all the other acts of his life the act of marriage also was performed for the good of all.

12. The Master married for reviving that ideal by following it himself

13. The Master’s unprecedented relation of immaculate love with his wife. What the Holy Mother said about it

14. It is only to teach the married people that the Master enacted that play of love

“Whatever”, said the Master, “is done here (meaning himself) is for you all. Ah, if I do all the sixteen parts[1] (the whole) you may possibly do one. Again, if I piss standing,[2] you rascals will do it turning round and round.” It is for this reason only that the Master took upon his shoulders the duties and responsibilities of married life and followed in practice that very high ideal before the eyes of all, by actually discharging them to the farthest limit. If the Master had not been himself married, the lay disciples would have said, “It is only because he is not married that he is able to talk glibly on continence. It is only because he has not made his wife his own and has never lived together with her that it is possible for him to read us long sermons.” It is only in order to counteract such foolish ideas that the Master was not only married but he had his wedded wife in the days of her youth by his side at Dakshineswar. When the state of divine madness in him became normal after he had had the holy vision of the divine Mother he

lived together with his wife, directly feeling the manifestation of the divine Mother in her, worshipped her as the Mahavidya, the divine Shodasi, and then offered himself to her as the Divine. He lived together with her continually for eight months, and even shared his bed with her. He himself went sometimes to Kamarpukur, and sometimes to Jayramvati to the house of his father-in-law and spent there a month or two for the training of his wife and for her mental peace and happiness. Remembering the event of the time when the Master lived with her at Dakshineswar, the Holy Mother says even now to women devotees, "It cannot be expressed in words in what wonderful divine moods he passed his days and nights then. In that state of divine semi-consciousness what strange and wonderful words he spoke and with what flow! Sometimes he laughed, sometimes wept and sometimes was quite motionless in ecstasy. That was how whole nights passed. What a wonderful presence and what an ecstasy! The whole of my body would tremble to see that, and I would wish the night might soon come to an end. I did not then understand anything of ecstasy; one night when I saw that his ecstasy did not come to an end, I was frightened, and wept and sent for Hriday. He came and went on repeating the Lord's name in his ears, when, after a long time, he regained normal consciousness. Then when he came to know of my suffering, anxiety and fear, he himself taught me how in particular kinds of ecstasy particular names and Mantras of God were to be repeated into his ears. After that I did not feel so much frightened; he would return to normal consciousness when those names and Mantras were uttered into his ears. A long time, passed that way, when one day he asked me to go to bed separately in the music room as he had come to know that I could have no sleep and remained in suspense as to when and what kinds of ecstasy he might have." The supremely revered Holy Mother says that the Master taught her then all the domestic matters such as how to place the wick in the lamp, what sort of man each member of the household was, how to behave with each of them, and how to behave when she went to someone else's house. He taught her also devotional exercises, the reciting of the names and glories of God, meditation, Samadhi and even the knowledge of Brahman. O men rearing families, how many of you teach your own wives this way? How many of you can have devotion to your wives, respect and love for them all your lives this way, if for some reason or other the very contemptible physical relationship comes to an end forthwith? We,

therefore, say that it was for you alone that this wonderful incarnation of the age was married, and had no physical relationship for even a single day with his wife and maintained a sweet love for her. He did it so that you might learn that it was not for indulgence in sensual pleasure that the institution of marriage had come into being, but that it carried a very high purpose with it; only that both of you, wife and husband, might keep your aim fixed at this high ideal and be blessed by observing continence (Brahmacharya) according to your capacity in married life; and only that you might prove a blessing to the modern society devoid of vigour, devoid of grace and devoid of power, by producing heroic and virtuous children of wonderful intelligence and memory. It is for your benefit that this which was not necessary to be shown to the world by its spiritual teachers of the past, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Sankara, Chaitanya or any other, has been shown in this age by Ramakrishna. This unseen and unheard-of sacred mould of married life has been cast for the first time in the world as a result of lifelong severe austerities and Sadhana. Now, as the Master used to say, "Cast your own lives into that ideal-mould and get them shaped after it."

15. We must form our married life after the ideal of the Master and observe continence at least partially. No good will otherwise come to us

"But—" says the married householder, "But". We see it and reply in the words of Swami Vivekananda speaking about our spiritual practices, "Do you think that each of you will become a Paramahamsa Ramakrishna? That is not to be; 'neither will nine maunds of oil burn nor will Radha dance'.[1] Only one Paramahamsa Ramakrishna is born in the world; 'only one lion lives in a forest'." O rearers of families, we also similarly say in reply to your 'but': "The Master knew very well that it was beyond your power to observe absolute continence (Brahmacharya) living with your wife like him. He knew it and yet he set the exacting example to you because you might then be encouraged to do at least 'one-sixteenth' of it. But know it for certain that if you do not follow that high ideal, if you do not try to look upon women as the direct counterparts of the Mother of the universe and to offer, according to your capacity, the selfless love of your heart to them; if, on the other hand, you always look upon women, who are the mothers of

the world, with beastly eyes, as your dependent slaves and instruments for providing enjoyments for you, then know that your destruction is certain and very near. And remember what happened to the race of Yadu for neglecting the advice of Krishna as also the sad plight of the Jews who disregarded the instruction of Jesus. Treating with indifference the incarnations of the age has been the cause of the destruction of nations at all times."

16. A few objections to the fact that the Master had no physical relationship with his wife and their refutation

After replying to one more query we shall finish speaking about the unprecedented manifestation of the mood of the spiritual teacher through the married life of the Master and then describe other aspects of that topic. Slave to sights, tastes and other sense-objects, and strongly attached to external things, the human mind is surely thinking even now that having got married at all it would have been well if after begetting at least one child he gave up physical relationship with his wife. If he had done that perhaps it would have been proved that all men without exception have for their duty the maintenance of the divine Lord's creation and at the same time the authority of the scriptures refutation would not have been violated. For the scriptures say that at least one child should be produced in married life, by which man is freed from the debt to his forefathers. To this objection we reply:

First, is creation really nothing more than this little, too gross globe that we see, hear, think and imagine? It is the law of creation that there should be diversity in it. It will not be very long before creation is destroyed if from this moment we all begin to think and act alike in all matters. We then ask you, "Have you known all the laws governing creation and is it a fact that only for the purpose of keeping up the Lord's creation you have lost your continence (Brahmacharya) today? Be sincere in your reply and don't try to deceive yourself and others; or as the Master would say, 'Don't commit perjury in the shrine of sentiment,' " Well, let us assume for argument's sake that you are obeying that law of the maintenance of creation. What right have you to ask others to do the same? It is also a law

within creation not to waste energy on ordinary things, so that the power of continence or other higher mental powers might be manifested. Who will manifest the higher spiritual powers, if, like you, every one were to manifest the lower powers? The manifestation of such powers will be impossible in that case.

17. It is clear from the Holy Mother's worshipping the Master all her life as the universal Mother that his marriage took place under the impulsion of the mood of the spiritual teacher in him

Secondly, it is our habit to select from the scriptures passages that are to our liking; the injunction regarding the production of a child is also similarly quoted. For, the scriptures again say according to people's fitness, "Yadahareva virajet tadahareva pravrajet.[1] That is, As soon as one's love for God increases and produces detachment from the world one shall renounce it." Therefore, who would have maintained the authority of this saying of the scriptures, if the Master had followed your opinion? The same thing applies to the paying off of the debt to one's forefathers. The scriptures say that a true Sannyasin liberates, by virtue of his spiritual merits, the seven immediately higher and seven lower generations of his family. Therefore, we have no reason to be worried on the score that the debt of the Master to his forefathers was not paid off.

It was in order to teach us, that the Master tied himself down to matrimony. We can know a little of what a high and sacred ideal he has left behind for us from the fact of the Holy Mother's worshipping the Master all her life as the Mother of the universe. It is generally seen that a man cannot hide his weakness from his wife though he can do it from others. The Master used sometimes to say to us about it, "All the big wigs—Babus, judges, magistrates, etc., however big they may talk—are all, as it were, earthworms, slaves to their wives. When orders, even though unjustifiable, come from the 'inner apartment'[1] they have no power to overrule them." Therefore, if anybody's wife offers sincere, heart-felt devotion to him and worships him all her life as God Himself, it becomes indubitably clear that there is no dross in the ideal which he preaches. This is what we cannot say so definitely about any person other than the Master. This is not the place to

describe the story of the Master’s wonderful Lila of love with his wife though there is much to say about it. So we introduced this topic only as an indication of the manifestation of the Master’s mood as a spiritual teacher.

Footnote

1. Luke 2. 2.

1. There is a custom in the villages of Bengal that a cultivator attaches, as a mark, a straw to a fruit like cucumber etc., which he considers to be very good and desires to offer to the divine Lord, so that the cultivator himself inadvertently or any one of the household unknowingly, may not pluck and sell it. The Master applied the simile to this case, meaning thereby that it was divinely ordained that he should be married to the daughter of such and such a man, that the girl had been reserved as his bride by Providence.

2. Sankara's commentary on *Brahma-sutras,* IV. 1. 13-15.—Tr,

1. Game at dice etc.—Tr.

1. The ceremony of marriage requires the use of flowers among other things.— Tr.

1. The metaphor is from the sixteen annas of a rupee, the Indian coin.—Tr.

2. This is regarded opprobrious amongst the Hindus.—Tr.

1. A dancing girl of that name stipulated that she would dance only-when the stage was illuminated by lights burning nine maunds of oil. It means a thing beyond the range of possibility. —Tr.

1. *Jabala Upanishad.* 4.

1. According to the purdah, ladies live in an inner quadrangle which is called the inner apartment".—Tr.

CHAPTER V
THE MOOD OF THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER IN YOUTH

> Veiled by the ignorance consisting of the three Gunas I am not manifest to all (except to some of My devotees). The deluded world does not know Me, the unborn and the immutable.
>
> —Gita VII. 25.

1. It is not by mere wish that man becomes a spiritual teacher or a leader

A special manifestation of the mood of the spiritual teacher in the Master's life began on the day he engaged himself to perform the sacred daily worship of the divine Mother at Dakshineswar. It was then the period of his Sadhana. He was in a state of divine madness on account of love of God. In spite of all these, one who is a spiritual teacher is always so and one who is a leader is so from childhood. It is not as if people form a committee, consult one another and accord him the position of the spiritual teacher or the leader. As soon as he appears before society, the minds of people are filled with respect for him and, bowing their heads before him, they immediately begin to learn from him and obey his commands. This is the law. Swami Vivekananda said, "A leader is always born and never made." It is therefore seen that the acts which call forth irrevocable punishment from an angry society when they are committed by ordinary people, make the same society follow them fondly, when they are performed by the teachers of people. Bhagavan Sri Krishna says in the Gita,[1] "People follow whatever he (a teacher of people) sets as the standard by his own action." Strange as it may appear, it has all along been a fact and will continue to be so. "Let the worship of Indra", said Sri Krishna, "be stopped from today and that of

Govardhana [2] commenced" and people began to do that. "From today," said Buddha, "let animal sacrifice be stopped" and immediately society discarded the injunction "*Yajnarthe pasavah srishtah*" —animals have been created (to be killed) for the purpose of sacrifices. Jesus gave permission to his disciples to have their meals on the Sabbath day. That became the rule. Mohammad married many wives, and, still people respect and follow him as a religious hero and a selfless teacher. In all things, great or small, that is the case—whatever they say and do become the standard of moral conduct.

2. The unlimited "I" - ness, the origin of all consciousness of the phenomenal beings, is easily manifested in the spiritual teachers of the world, but it is not so with ordinary people

We have already said[3] why that happens. The limited self, the "I" of the spiritual teachers of people is completely destroyed for all time and its place is occupied by the universal "I", which is the origin of all thoughts and beings. It is the nature of that I to seek the good of the many. And just as the bees come to know of the blossoming of flowers and, eagerly desirous of getting honey, gather round them, though the flowers do not send a loving invitation to the bees, so, as soon as the universal "I" manifests itself in any person; the afflicted people of the world, somehow or other, know it and run uninvited to him for peace and bliss. It is with great difficulty and after a good deal of austerities, that a little, a drop or two so to speak, of the manifestation of that unlimited "I" takes place in the ordinary perfected man; whereas, in the lives of the spiritual teachers of the world, there is some manifestation of it from the very beginning of their lives; in youth there is a greater degree of manifestation; and at last its fullest manifestation is found in the wonderful acts and deeds, witnessing which, men, in awe and amazement, look upon the spiritual teacher as one with God. For, the manifestation of that superhuman mood then becomes as natural to them as their common daily actions like breathing, eating, drinking and walking. What can, therefore, an ordinary man do? Unable to fathom the depth of their divine nature with his plumbline of selfishness,—poor man, perplexed —what can he do but look upon them as God Himself and with absolute reliance and devotion take refuge in them?

3. The time when it became perfectly manifested and natural to the Master

When we study the Master's life we also find the gradual unfoldment of this mood daily in his life when he was in the state of a Sadhaka in his youth: and at the end of austere spiritual practices for twelve years, it became fully manifested in him and cast a halo of naturalness around it. At that time the ordinary human intellect was at a loss to know which I-consciousness the Master was in at any particular moment and when the mood of the spiritual teacher was manifested in him through his identification with the universal "I". But when this mood attained its full development is a distinct story and it will be told at its proper place. Now, it is necessary to tell the reader here a little of how he behaved on many occasions in his youth at the time of his Sadhana when he was beside himself with the divine mood.

4. That mood at the time of his Sadhana—in his behaviour towards Rani Rasmani and Mathur

We find the first manifestation of the mood of the spiritual teacher during his youth in connection with Rani Rasmani, the foundress of the Kali temple at Dakshineswar and her son-in-law Mathuranath. None of us have had the good fortune of seeing either of the two. But, from what we have heard from the Master himself, it is very clear that at the very first sight, a love for the Master grew in their hearts and gradually it assumed unusual depth. It will perhaps appear to our minds to be a fairy tale instead of a fact that man can love an ordinary man so much and have so much reliance on and devotion to that man; for, on superficial observation the Master was then an ordinary, insignificant priest and they were leaders in society, great in wealth, respect, learning and intelligence, though not of a high caste.

5. The strange nature of the Master

Now, the Master had a strange nature from his childhood. Wealth, respect, learning, intelligence, big titles and appellations at the end of one's name because of which people regard one as great, were never held in great

regard by him. The Master used to say, "When one ascends the monument[1] —the three or four-storeyed buildings, the tall trees and the grass growing low on the ground—all look alike." We also find that from his childhood the Master's mind generally dwelt on such a high plane, because of his devotion to truth and love of God, that from there differences in wealth, respect, learning, etc., on account of which we get puffed up and "the vast earth appears to us to be but a saucer", are not seen. Or, the Master's mind would always discriminate before undertaking anything and arrive at a definite conclusion by deep thinking as to why a thing should be done, where the relation with a particular person would ultimately lead and where it had led others under similar conditions. Therefore, those things could, by no manner of means, hide their purpose and final development from him under a charming guise and deflect him from the right course even for a short time. The reader may say, "But this kind of discriminating intellect will bring first of all the defects of all things before the eyes and paralyse all urge for activity and make all undertakings impossible." It is exactly so. If the intellect were not purified before and freed from desires and if it were not turned to the high ideal of the realization of God, it would undoubtedly render man aimless and inactive and sometimes self-willed and reckless. If, on the contrary, the intellect is turned to purity and high ideals, it alone probes all things to the very bottom and finds their defects, thereby leading man quickly forward along the path to the realization of God. Therefore Sri Krishna in the Gita[1] has asked only men of such faith and devotion only to find out the painful evils inherent in birth, death, decrepitude and disease, and thereby attain dispassion. Let us observe how well-developed was that faculty of finding the hollowness of worldly things in the Master's character from his childhood. Admitted into school he was not attracted by such titles as Tarkalankara, or Vidyavagisa, by name and fame, but found out instead, that these big Tarkavagisas and Nyayachanchus were dancing attendance at the doors of the rich, parading their learning by long quotations from Nyaya and Vedanta for the "bundling of rice and plantain", for their mere livelihood. Having got married, he was not at all attracted by worldly pleasures and amusements, but found out instead, the evils in committing oneself once for all, to worldly life, in order to have an ephemeral, uncertain happiness, and in running after money by increasing one's wants. Seeing

that everything in the world could be achieved and every position gained by money, he was not thereby induced to devote himself heart and soul to the earning of money, but found out instead, that mere rice, pulses, cloth, brick, earth, wood etc., might be had for money but not the realization of God. And, again, he was not attracted towards acquiring name and fame as a man of charity, a philanthropist[2], etc., but found out instead, that as a result of lifelong efforts there might be established at the most a few free schools, a few charitable dispensaries or a few rest-houses and that then would follow death, when the philanthropist would leave the world behind in as much want and joylessness as before. And the same was the spirit manifested regarding everything else!

6. It was difficult for the wealthy and the learned to recognize the Master. The reasons for it

Therefore, it was very very difficult for ordinary men, especially for the people proud of their learning and wealth, to rightly recognize and understand the Master who had such a peculiar nature; for as nobody is plain with them, they lose very often the power of listening to straightforward talks on account of their purse-proud nature and the public honour accorded to them. So it is not at all surprising that, unable to recognize him, they should take him to be vulgar, mad or proud. It therefore adds to our surprise to see Rani Rasmani's and Mathuranath's love and reverence for him. It seems to us that it was a unique stroke of good fortune that, by the grace of God, not only did they keep intact their first love for him but surrendered themselves entirely at his holy feet when they were being daily acquainted with his divine mood as a spiritual teacher. Otherwise, it would not have been easy for Rani Rasmani and Mathur Babu to give up egoism and pride of wealth and contract a love for the Master at the first sight and maintain and develop it to the last to a surprising degree; the more so as the Master was so queer and old fashioned. For example, he went without food on the day of the dedication ceremony of the Kali temple at Dakshineswar, and later, when he had to stay in the temple, he would day after day rather do his own cooking on the river bank, of the provisions supplied from the temple-stores, than partake of the food offered to the

Deity and sanctified by Her —all because the cooked food belonged to the low caste people which, as he thought, would pollute him, though his own brother had performed the worship, offered the food and partaken of the Prasada. Mathur's love and vague admiration for the Master led him to seek an opportunity to appoint him as a priest of the Mother Kali, but the eccentric Master avoided talking with the worldly Mathur, the latter's repeated attempts notwithstanding. Is it not extraordinary that under such circumstances the love of Mathur and the Rani went on steadily increasing?

7. The Master's condition after his marriage. Mathur's attraction towards him and others' opinion of him

The Master had by now got married. He was in the hey-day of his youth. He had returned to Dakshineswar after his marriage and had taken charge of the worship of Kali, the divine Mother. And as soon as he had done so, the divine madness was again upon him.[1] In his agony at not having realized God, he rolled on the ground restlessly and rubbed his face mercilessly against it, crying piteously all the while, "Mother", "Mother". People would gather round him in multitudes and in sympathy would say, "Ah, the poor man must be suffering from a terrible colic. Nothing else can make one so restless."

And sometimes he became motionless at the time of worship, on placing all the flowers for worship on his own head; and again, sometimes, like one mad, he went on singing for a long time the songs composed by Sadhakas. At other times, however, when he was somewhat in the normal mood, he behaved with all as he should. But when meditating on the divine Mother, such ecstasies would come, not once or twice but very often, not in small doses but with overwhelming intensity; then he would have no consciousness of the surroundings, nor hear anybody's words nor reply to anybody. But even during those times people felt very often the exquisite beauty of his divine nature; for, even then if anybody requested him to sing a song or two on the Mother, he would begin immediately to sing in his exquisitely sweet voice and, filled with the spirit of the song, would lose himself in it.

Now, not only the lower officers but the cashier, the chief officer of the temple, brought many tales of the Master's improper and unceremonious actions to the ears of Rani Rasmani and Mathur Babu. It was reported: "The junior[1] Bhattacharya is ruining everything; the Mother's worship and the offering of food to Her are not done properly. Can the Mother accept anything that is done so improperly?" They complained, but the desired effect was not produced; for Mathur Babu used now and then to come suddenly to the temple without informing anybody and, remaining unobserved, noticed the longing devotional behaviour of the Master and his affectionate childlike importunities to the divine Mother during the worship, shedding tears of joy and devotion. He then ordered the officers of the temple: "You shall not obstruct the junior Bhattacharya or find fault with him in anything he may do. You shall inform me first and then act as I order."

Rani Rasmani also would come from time to time to the temple and become so charmed with the floral decoration of the Mother and with songs of the Mother's name and glory, sung by the Master in his exquisitely sweet voice, that whenever she came to the Kali temple she would call the junior Bhattacharya to her and request him to sing her a few songs. The Master also completely forgot that he was singing for any mortal and, filled with the spirit of the songs, went on singing as if he was doing it for the divine Mother Herself. Thus days were rolling on. As in the big household of the world, so in the small one in the temple, all were busy with their own affairs, relieving the humdrum monotony of their lives by indulging in such piquant subjects as speaking ill of others and carrying and inventing tales during the little leisure they could snatch from looking after their worldly affairs and thinking about their own selfish interests. Therefore, who was there to notice what changes were being brought about in the mind of the junior Bhattacharya on account of his love of God? "He is a mad fellow. The Babus (the proprietors) have somehow taken a fancy to him, and that is why he still retains the job. But how long can he retain it? He is sure to commit some strange act some day and will be driven away. Is there any certainty about the temper of the big folk? It takes very little time to please them or to displease them." This was the kind of talk that sometimes went

on among the officers. The Master's nephew and attendant Hriday had joined him there by that time.

8. In the mood of the spiritual teacher the Master punished Rani Rasmani

One day Rani Rasmani came to the temple; all the officers were very busy. The shirkers too were that day attending to their duties very carefully. After taking her bath in the Ganga, the Rani went to the Kali temple. The worship and the dressing up of the divine Kali were then finished. The Rani saluted the Mother and sat down on a seat near the holy image within the temple to perform her daily worship. She saw the junior Bhattacharya near and requested him to sing "Mother's name". The Master also sat down near the Rani and, filled with devotional emotions, began to sing the songs of Ramprasad, Kamalakanta and other mystics; she was listening to these songs while performing worship, Japa, etc. This went on for some time; but the Master suddenly got annoyed and stopped singing and sharply exclaimed in a harsh tone, "That thought alone! That thought even here?" Saying so, he immediately struck the tender person of the Rani with the palm of his hand. The Master was in that very mood now in which a father becomes angry and punishes his child on seeing something wrong in its conduct. But who understood that?

9. Its result

All the officers in the temple and the women attendants of the Rani raised a hue and cry. The gatekeeper ran hastily to catch hold of the Master. Wondering what the noise within the temple was due to, the officers came there out of curiosity. But those who were the main cause of this noise—the Master and Rani Rasmani—both were calm and tranquil, without taking any notice of the noise and the officers' running hither and thither. The Master was calm and quiet with a gentle smile escaping his lips, serenely poised in his self. And finding on self-analysis that she had been thinking about the result of a particular case pending in the law court at that time instead of meditating on the universal Mother, the Rani was a little

embarrassed, repentant and serious. Again, wondering how the Master could know her thought, the Rani had also an element of surprise in her mind. Brought suddenly to her senses by the noise made by the officers, she apprehended that there was a possibility of a great injury being inflicted on the innocent Master by the mean-minded people; she then commanded them in a serious mood. “Bhattacharya is not at all to blame. Do not find fault with him.” Later, Mathur heard the whole story from the Rani and approved of her order. Some of the officers became very much disappointed; but what could they do? They thought, “What business have we with the big affairs of big people!” and remained quiet. When he reads this the reader will perhaps think, “What a strange mood of the spiritual teacher is this? What queer manifestation of that mood is this, that of assaulting people?”

10. Similar events in the lives of Sri Chaitanya, Jesus and Sri Krishna

We reply, “Read the religious history of the world and you will see such events recorded in the lives of the religious teachers of the world. Remember the event in the life of Sri Chaitanya of bringing the Kazi to his senses and of transmitting devotion to Acharya Advaita by beating them.

Think and you will find that such events were not lacking in the life of Jesus also. Surrounded by his disciples, Jesus came to visit the temple of Jehovah at Jerusalem and to offer worship, sacrifices, etc., there. What doubt is there about the fact that the Jewish mind would feel the same pure and wonderful devotion at the time of visiting the temple at Jerusalem as is felt by a Hindu mind in visiting the holy places like Varanasi, Vrindavan and other centres of pilgrimage? Over and above that, the mind of Jesus was also in Bhavamukha.[1] Completely filled with the love of God, he ran to have the direct vision of the Deity as soon as he saw the temple from a distance. Many people were there outside the temple, at the gate and in the courtyard, variously busy in worldly affairs, such as earning money, deceiving others, etc., regardless of whether the pilgrims had the vision of the Deity or not. The temple priests were attentive only to their pursuit of extracting a little money out of them and the shopkeepers and others were all much given to considering how they could gain a little more than usual by selling animals, flowers and other accessories of worship. Who felt the

necessity of thinking that he was in the presence of God in the temple? While he was entering the temple nothing of these things, however, attracted the attention of Jesus, who was filled with spiritual emotions. Going straight into the temple and having the vision of the Deity, he was beside himself with joy to see that He was within him as the Life of his life and the Self of his self. He began to feel that the temple and all the persons and things in it were more than his own; for it was on coming here that he was blessed with the vision of the source and solace of his life. When, however, coming down again, the mind was looking for the manifestation of the inner mood in the persons and things outside, he found that everything was the opposite of congenial; that no one was engaged in the service of the solace of his life; but that every one was given to the enjoyment of lust and gold. His heart was then filled with despair and sorrow. He thought, "What is this? Why don't you do whatever you like in the world outside? Why are all these worldly affairs here, where there is an especial manifestation of God? Instead of thinking of Him while you are here and doing away with your worldly anguish, why have you brought in the world here too?" Thinking thus, he was seized with divine anger and he assumed a terrible appearance and with a cane in hand drove off all the shopkeepers and others out of the temple by force. Having got a momentary awakening of the spirit from his words, they also went out without offering any resistance whatsoever, thinking that they had been indeed committing misdeeds. The men fully tied down to the world, who could not be awakened by words, got it by being flogged and went out. Neither were they angry, nor did they dare harm him in any way.

In the life of Sri Krishna also many events of this nature are found; for example, a man was beaten by him, and forthwith got an awakening and recited hymns and praises to him as the divine Lord Himself. Again, extremely earth-bound men came to harm him and got perplexed and stupefied by his words and laughter. Enough now of these incidents of the Puranas.

11. The Master's strange method of teaching, when overwhelmed by the divine power manifested as the spiritual teacher, and the good fortune of Rani Rasmani

This event is a bright example of the way in which the Master, under the impulsion of the divine power manifested as the spiritual teacher, used to lose his individuality and teach and behave towards others. If we probe the event to the bottom, it does not seem to be a very ordinary matter. What a great difference do we find between the two; the one, insignificant temple-priest receiving a very small pay, and the other, Rasmani, the Rani whose wealth, respect, intelligence, patience, courage and power astounded even the then very intelligent people of Calcutta. One is led to believe that such a poor Brahmin would find it difficult to approach her; or, if somehow he could do so, he would seek an opportunity to please her a little by flattery and such other methods and would consider himself blessed if he succeeded. But, what actually happened was quite the contrary. There was not only a protest against her wrong action but the infliction of punishment on her person! Just as looking at the incident from the Master's side, it seems to be a matter for no little surprise; so, from the Rani's side also, it does seem very surprising that anger, egoism and an idea of doing injury to him did not cross her mind even though she met with that kind of behaviour. But, as we have already said, when the mood of the spiritual teacher thus appears in the minds of great souls identified with the universal I, devoid of the slightest tinge of selfishness, ordinary men have to bow their heads before them even against their will, not to speak of the people of Sattvika nature like the Rani who was a devotee; for, raised by the teacher's grace and power, the limited human minds, with attention fixed on their own interest only, can understand of themselves that whatever the teacher says conduces to their true interest. And there remains no alternative but to act in accordance with his directions. Again, as the Master used to say, "A man cannot become great in anything, nor can he digest[1] fame, power, position, etc., if he has not a special part of God in him." The Rani could receive the grace of the Master, manifested as it was in that harsh manner, only because that kind of divine power was present in her, who was of a Sattvika nature. "Rani Rasmani", said the Master, "was one of the eight Nayikas (attendant goddesses) of the divine Mother. She came down to the world to spread the worship of the divine Mother. 'Sri Rasmani Dasi desirous of realizing the feet of Kali', were the words engraved on the seal

to mark the documents and other papers of her estate. A steadfast devotion to the divine Mother was manifested in every action of the Rani."

12. What the scriptures say about the characteristics of the mind merged in God

There is another thing to be mentioned. It is recorded in the scriptures that a mind completely merged in God exists in various moods. Sri Sankara has described it beautifully in his book *Viveka-chudamani* (540):

"Digambaro vapi cha sambaro va
Tvagambaro vapi chidambarasthah
Unmattavat vapi cha balavat va
Pishachavat vapi charatyavanyam."

That is, persons who have had their lives' purpose fulfilled by the realization of the Self, roam about in the world in strange attires—some with ordinary clothes on, some clad in barks of trees, others having knowledge or the points of the compass as their dress (i.e., stark naked), some like madmen, some like boys free from the slightest tinge of lust and gold; others again are similarly seen like ghosts.

13. Why it is so difficult to understand the behaviour of the religious teachers of the people, specially that of Sri Ramakrishna

These persons appear to be in such states in the eyes of the ordinary people inasmuch as the former remain always identified with the universal I; but, it is through them alone that the power of God in the form of the spiritual teacher, able to destroy the darkness of ignorance, is specially manifested. For we have already said that it is only by the destruction of the little selfish "I" that the immense "I" pervading the universe and the divine power as the spiritual teacher doing good to the people are manifested together. Those persons of self-knowledge, who remain always in the position of teachers of religion or Rishis, have to behave like ordinary men and seem, according to circumstances and for the training of others, to possess good conduct, steadfastness, restraint, power of argumentation, knowledge of scriptures, etc., in short, an intense attachment for everything

that is good and moral and a strong detachment or aversion from everything that is bad and immoral. We have said "seem" because they spend their lifetime in these moods in order to indicate to others the path leading beyond the realm of Maya, though they ever live in the full awareness of the non-dual Brahman, oneness of all things and ideas, good or bad, religious or irreligious, moral or immoral, which belong to the domain of Maya. When ordinary religious teachers have very often to spend their time in this way, it is superfluous to mention that the incarnations of God or the teachers of mankind or the world teachers would spend their lifetime in the way mentioned above. That is why it is so difficult for ordinary human beings to understand and gauge their nature, their acts and endeavours. It is especially so in the case of Bhagavan[1] Sri Ramakrishna, the incarnation for the modern age. For, the greatness, power, splendour, etc., so far recorded in the scriptures as manifested in the incarnations of God, were hidden in such a way in him that no one could get an inkling of these things by seeing him superficially a few times—not till they were intimately connected with him as genuine seekers of truth receiving his grace. Consider: What is the external quality in him by which you could feel attracted? By knowledge? —he was, so to say, wholly illiterate. How could you know that the Veda, the Vedanta and all other scriptures were read out to him and he had completely mastered them all by virtue of his prodigious memory? Will you gauge him by his intellect? What counsel would you seek from him, from whose lips are always heard words like, "I am nothing, I don't know anything, my Mother knows everything?" And even if you seek his guidance, he says, "Ask Mother, and She will tell you." Can you keep your faith steady and act according to his words? You will think, "Ah, what a piece of advice he has given us; we have all been hearing since we read the primers like *Kathamala* and *Bodhodaya*[1] that God is all-knowing, all-powerful, formless and of the nature of pure consciousness, that He can, if He wills, give us the knowledge and understanding of everything. But will it do to act up to this teaching?" Will you make an estimate of him by wealth, name and fame? Ah, the Master himself had indeed plenty of all these! And he would again advise you from the very beginning to renounce them. Such was the case with everything around him. The only means by which to gauge him was by seeing his purity, love of God and goodwill. If

you were attracted by these, well and good; if not, it was beyond your reach to gauge and understand him. We, therefore, say that it was not a matter of small fortune for Rani Rasmani, that she, instead of rejecting the grace through egoism and pride because of the harsh way in which it was manifested, could understand and profit by the Master's mood as the spiritual teacher and treasure it up in the innermost chamber of her heart.

Footnote

1. *Gita,* III. 21.

2. A hillock in Vrindavan.

3. III. 3. 11-15

1. The Ochterloney monument at the Calcutta maidan.—Tr.

1. Gita, XIII. 9.

2. That the author does not mean to discourage selfless work leading to liberation will be evident from II. 21. 13.—Tr.

1. II. 7.

1. The Master’s elder brother was called senior Bhattacharya; he was therefore known as the junior Bhattacharya.

1. III. 3. 11-15 and III. 1. 34-35.—Tr.

1. Digest *i.e.* keep the head cool in spite of power and position, and not abuse them as a result of conceits.

1. The person in whom all the six auspicious qualities—lordliness, Dharma, fame, splendour, knowledge and dispassion—are manifested in the fullest measures is known as Bhagavan.—Tr.

1. They were two of children’s text books in Bengali.—Tr.

CHAPTER VI
THE MOOD OF THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER AND MATHURANATH

> I shall now tell you, O best of the Kurus, the principal forms which I have become and which are unknown to men, (for) there is no end to those forms.
>
> —Gita X. 19

1. It takes a long time for a big flower to blossom

We have already said that the gradual manifestation of the mood of the spiritual teacher in the life of the Master took place to a great extent before the eyes of Rani Rasmani and Mathur Babu. "A large flower", said the Master, "takes a long time to blossom. Trees having pith take a longer time to grow." It took not a little time and discipline for the unprecedented mood of the spiritual teacher to manifest itself in the Master's life also. It required a continual and austere discipline for twelve years. This is not the place for bringing out a description of that Sadhana. Here we are specially concerned with the Master's mood as the spiritual teacher, the flower that blossomed in its full beauty and glory under the rays of the Sun of consciousness universal; we shall particularly describe it here. But certain other topics will of course come in by the way, as we describe from beginning to end the manifestation of that mood. A description of those devotees connected with the unfoldment of this mood of the Master will also inevitably come in.

2. The strange relation of the Master with Mathur; the nature of Mathur as a man

The relation of the Master with Mathur Babu was a strange one. Mathur was wealthy and magnanimous; though a man of the world, he was a devotee; though a man of discrimination who knew the distinction between the permanent and the impermanent, he liked the things of the world; and though prone to anger and rashness, he had patience and strong determination. Mathur was not unacquainted with the knowledge and the view of life that the English brought to the land. He was given to much argumentation and yet was open to correction. Though a devotee having faith in God, he was not the man to accept anything without exercising his reason, even if the speaker be his spiritual teacher or God Himself. Though of a liberal nature, he was not a man to be deceived like a fool in worldly affairs; rather the shrewd intellect of a crafty politician, and lack of scruples in the choice of means, as in other worldly landlords, which lead to the increase of possessions, were sometimes seen in him; As a matter of fact, Mathur Babu, the youngest of her sons-in-law, was the right-hand man of the Rani, who was without male issue, in looking after and making proper arrangement for all worldly affairs, though she had other sons-in-law living. And it was only because the intellects of both the mother-in-law and the youngest son-in-law co-operated that the name of Rani Rasmani became so very well known then.

3. The unconscious help rendered by Rani Rasmani and Mathur in the manifestation of the Master's power as the spiritual teacher. All persons connected either as enemies or as friends help the manifestation of the power of the incarnations of God

The reader will perhaps say, "Why this 'song of Siva while husking paddy?'[1] Why bring in Mathur while you are speaking of the Master?" In answer, it may be said that it was Mathur who caught just a little glimpse of the future beauty of the object, and became its helper and protector, when the Master's mood of spiritual teacher was just cutting open the cocoon and was about to come out. Under a very pure, sacred urge, Rani Rasmani built a fit place where this unique character could unfold itself freely; and under a similar noble urge Mathur helped its further development by supplying whatever else was necessary. It is of course only now, after the lapse of

many years, that we can understand it all. But although both of them got a little inkling of it from time to time, it does not seem that either of them ever could have had a full understanding as to why they were doing those things. This fact is borne out by the study of the lives of all great souls of all ages. It is seen that a strange unknown Power, remaining unobserved in an unknown realm, clears their paths in all endeavours, protects them at all times, in all circumstances and in all respects and, controlling other peoples' powers, brings them under the control of those great souls. Yet the former cannot even know that whatever they do, either of their own accord or out of love for or hatred towards the latter, is for the sake of the latter, contributing to their work and bringing out the power surging within them by the removal of all obstructions. All this is done with so much of secrecy, so to say, that people are amazed long afterwards when the discovery is made. See the result of Kaikeyi's sending away Sri Ramachandra to the forest; see the ultimate result of the lifelong efforts of Kamsa in keeping Vasudeva and Devaki imprisoned; see the result of the building up of the pleasure-garden by King Suddhodhan lest Siddhartha should be overcome by dispassion; see the result of the cruel Kapalika Bauddhas' effort at killing Acharya Sankara by means of incantations; see the result of the acts of enmity, with the help of Government officials, towards Sri Chaitanya's preaching of the religion of love; and see the result of killing the supremely glorious Jesus on a false charge of having committed a crime. Every one of these cases turned out to be the opposite of what had been intended, like the story[1] of "Rama took it contrariwise". Yet the very powerful and intelligent adversaries and the affectionate friends both always thought "otherwise" and acted from their own motives—and will do so in future-— applying the whole stock of their subtle policy and worldly wisdom. But, as recorded in the *Bhagavata* and other books, one acting as an enemy has to remain completely ignorant of the actions and purpose of that divine power; while one can sometimes have a little knowledge of this power if one follows it with faith and devotion. And with the help of that knowledge he becomes a fit person to attain liberation and eternal peace by becoming gradually free from desires. Mathur's conduct towards the Master was of the latter type.

4. It is the same with ordinary human life; there is a great similarity between it and that of an incarnation of God

It is not only in the life of great souls like incarnations of God that the play of this divine power is seen. But we can know of this play in their lives more easily and feel a greater wonder; that is all. We also find just a little indication of it when we study the history of our own daily lives and that of the practical life of the world. As the result of various experiences and by a comparative study of various events of human life it becomes very clear that man is always a mere puppet in the hands of that divine power. It is not an extraordinary matter that a great similarity exists between the lives of the great souls, the incarnations of God, and those of ordinary human beings. For, the divine lives serve only as the types or models for the formation of other ordinary lives. It is after the ideals of their lives only that ordinary men are trying to pattern their own lives and will for ever do so. Do you not see that a few great souls, Rama, Krishna, Chaitanya and others have retained a hold on the lives of the people of India, the vast meeting ground of the various ideals of various people? Again, see how quickly the ideal of the life of Sri Ramakrishna, the incarnation of the present age, the unique mould formed by the combination of the ideals of all the previous great souls, is spreading its own influence and in a very short time getting a hold on the lives of the men and women of this country and abroad. How far this influence will spread in course of time, O reader, you may guess if you can. We are, however, unable to conjecture and express this.

5. Though a devotee, Mathur was not foolish

Another point in Mathur's character needs a little analysis when we are told of the manner in which he had more than hundred per cent love and reverence for the Master, Our minds, clouded with doubts, think at the very outset: "The man must have been an absolute fool. Can a man otherwise have such love and reverence for another man? Had it been we, we would have defied Ramakrishna to generate by the strength of his character so much love and reverence in our hearts,"—as if it were a matter to be condemned to have love and reverence! We are therefore trying here to state and explain to the reader exactly as much about Mathur as we heard from

the Master and can say that Mathur was not a man of an over-naive nature. He was not in any way less intelligent or suspicious than we. He also was suspicious of the Master's character and actions unintelligible to man and did not spare himself in testing him at every step in the beginning. But of what avail was it? How could the Airavata[1] of Mathur's scepticism withstand the force of the strong and furious current of the very powerful Mandakini of the Master's unprecedented and unheard-of spiritual mood, with knowledge for its roar and divine love for its eddies? The animal shook, slipped, was crushed and defeated, turned over and carried off to an unknown destination. So was Mathur's scepticism rendered useless. Completely defeated, Mathur had to take refuge at his holy feet wholeheartedly. It will not, therefore, take long to understand that we are describing the Master's mood of the spiritual teacher, though we are speaking of Mathur.

6. Mathur's first attraction towards the Master— its cause and gradual development

Mathur was attracted towards the Master at the very first sight on account of his straightforwardness like that of a boy, his sweet nature and good looks. Afterwards, during the first stage of Sadhana, the state of the divine madness began to come on the Master and he sometimes lost control over himself. While he was worshipping the universal Mother, he was beside himself with joy at the vision of Her within his heart, and worshipped himself. Then, on account of the force of the strong current of the love of God, he overstepped the limits of ceremonial devotion and became an object of opprobrium and suspicion to the people of the temple for performing in his daily life various acts of great devotion in a way contrary to scriptural injunction and having no meaning in the public eye. The keen intelligence and the sense of justice in Mathur, a man of the world, suggested immediately: "Nothing against him shall be entertained without seeing things with my own eyes, for I knew him to be of a beautiful and straightforward nature at the first sight." That is why Mathur came secretly to the Kali temple, observed all his actions minutely and as a result came to the conclusion, "Young Gadadhar is a living embodiment of divine love and

straightforwardness; on account of the excess of devotion and faith he is acting thus." This is why Mathur, an intelligent man of the world, tried to convince him thus: "It is good to do what suits one, if only it can last. It is good to have faith and devotion, but will it do to be completely overwhelmed? You cannot but be an object of condemnation to others for this. Moreover, there is a chance that you might lose your wits and become mad if you behave as you like without paying heed to what people say." But although he tried to persuade him in this way, the feeling of devotion lying dormant within Mathur became awakened by virtue of good company and sometimes he would suddenly exclaim: "But this kind of behaviour, as of mad people, issuing from intense devotional feelings has been heard of in the case of Ramprasad and of other earlier Sadhakas; may not the similar behaviour and condition of Sri Ramakrishna also be of that nature?" Therefore, instead of placing any obstacles in the way of the Master, Mathur decided to go on observing how all these would take shape and to take the proper step at the proper time. Such behaviour on the part of an employer, expert in worldly matters, towards a petty employee is an indication of not a little patience.

7. The change of Mathur was due to the infectious power of devotion

Devotion has a catching power. We see daily that, like physical changes, mental moods also are contagious. For it is no longer necessary to refer to the experiences of the Vedic seers to prove—for modern science has all but proved it now—that the entire universe, both gross and subtle, is made up of modifications of one substance and is governed by the same laws. Is it therefore surprising that the modification called devotion when awakened in one person will awaken a similar mood lying dormant in another? This is why the scriptures have declared so earnestly that the company of spiritual men is a great help to the awakening of spirituality. It can very well be inferred that owing to his good luck it happened so in the case of Mathur also. The more he began to observe day after day, the actions and behaviour of the Master, the more was the mood of devotion in him awakened without his knowledge. We find clear signs of this in his successive actions. But it is certain—just one moment his mind entertained a feeling of devotion and the

next moment doubt intervened— that Mathur's mind, like that of the worldly people, was for a long time oscillating between doubt and devotion, before the Master's seat was firmly fixed in Mathur's heart. So, we see that, although at the outset the Master's behaviour, eager longing for God and so on, appeared before Mathur's eyes to be due to an excess of devotion, when they went on increasing daily, Mathur began to doubt if the Master was not going out of his wits. But that doubt kindled kindness in him and Mathur applied his mind to improving the Master's general health and thereby curing these mental derangements, and engaged a good physician for the purpose.

8. Argumentation between the Master and Mathur with his modern education. The law of nature gets altered by the will of God. A red china-rose plant producing white flower

Mathur had a fair knowledge of English and he acquired not a small amount of that peculiar idea of independence (viz., that he was not an insignificant man but equal to any other) which is the product of the Western temperament and manner of thinking. Therefore we find Mathur trying to dissuade the Master with the help of persuasion and argument from going far along the path leading to mental derangement due to an exuberance of love of God. A conversation between the Master and Mathur on whether God has to obey His own laws as regards natural phenomena may be mentioned as an example of it. The Master said, "Mathur was of the opinion that God had also to obey His own laws. Even He had not the power to overrule the laws He had once made. I said, 'What do you mean? He who makes a law can as well unmake it if he so desires, or replace it by another.' He would by no means accept this. He said, 'A plant producing red flowers invariably produces red ones and never white ones; for it is His law. Well, let Him, if He can, produce a white flower in a plant bearing red ones.' I said, 'He can, if He wills, do everything, including that.' But he did not accept the proposition. The next day I went to answer a call of nature towards the cluster of tamarisk trees, when I found that in two twigs of one and the same branch of a red chinarose plant there were two flowers, one red and the other brilliantly white, without the tiniest red spot in it. No

sooner had I seen them than I broke the branch together with the flowers, brought it and placed it before Mathur and said, 'Here you are.' Mathur then said, 'Yes, father, I am defeated'." Mathur sometimes believed that physical illness produced in the Master a sort of mental derangement which manifested itself as devotional feelings in excess, and tried by reasons and argument to turn that mood of the Master away.

9. Mathur was compelled daily to discuss the Master's condition

Thus the worldly-minded Mathur would, it is clear, spend a long time with him thinking and discussing a great deal about his condition, partly out of curiosity, partly out of kindness—for he mistook the Master's overwhelming mental condition for symptoms of a physical disease—and partly again out of wonder and devotion regarding it as an outcome of genuine divine love. And how could he remain calm and free from anxiety? For, the Master, carried away by the current of his newly coursing divine love, would everyday bring about something strange and unexpected. One day he saw a vision of the divine Mother within himself and seated himself on the seat for worship and employed all the articles of worship in his own honour; the previous day he had performed Arati of the universal Mother continuously for three long hours and made the officers of the temple restless, and the day before he had rolled on the ground and rubbing his face against the dust on the earth, at not having realized God, had wept so piteously that people gathered round him. Ah, how many indeed are the stories connected with different events of his life on different days that we heard from the Master!

10. Mathur and the Master's recital of the Mahimna-stotra and his Bhavasamadhi

One day the Master entered a Siva temple[1] and began to recite the hymn on the glory of Siva called the "Mahimna-stotra".[2] In the course of his recital, when he came gradually to the following verse, he was immediately beside himself with an ecstatic mood:

"Asitagirisamam syat kajjalam sindhupatre
Surataruvarasakha lekhani patramurvi;
Likhati yadi grihitwa Sarada sarvakalam
Tadapi tava gunanamisa param na yati."

—O Lord, if the blue mountain be the ink, the ocean the ink-pot, the biggest branch of the heavenly tree be the pen, the earth the writing leaf, and taking these, if the goddess of learning writes for eternity, even then the limit of Thy virtues will not be reached.

Reciting the above verse, the Master was completely beside himself with the intense feeling in his heart of the glory of Siva, forgot the hymn, the language of the hymn, the recitation of the verses in their order and all other things and cried out loudly saying again and again, "O great God, how can I express Your glory?" And tears flowed profusely from his eyes down his cheeks, breast and clothes, to the floor, which got wet. The servants and officers of the temple came there running from all sides, at that noise produced by weeping, the half-uttered words in a choked voice as of a madman, and that extraordinary behaviour. When they saw him in that state some were surprised, and waited to see what would happen next, saying, "Oh! it is the madness of the junior Bhattacharya." Said one, "I took it to be something else; I see, it is very much in excess today." "Will he not," said another, "ride on the shoulder of Siva? What do you say? It is better to pull him away by the hand", and so forth. And it is needless to say that there was much merriment over it too.

But the Master had no consciousness of the external world at all. Merged in the feeling of the glory of Siva his mind had then gone up very high beyond the external world, where the tainted ideas and words of the world never reach. How could, therefore, the words of derision or fun expressing their thoughts, reach his ears?

At that time Mathur Babu was at the Kali temple. Hearing that uproar in connection with the Bhattacharya he came there immediately. The officers hastened respectfully to make way for him. Mathur Babu came and saw the Master in that mood and was at once charmed with it. When some one of the officers suggested that the Master should forcibly be removed from the place where he was, i.e., near Siva, he was very much annoyed and said, "Leave him alone. Let him who has a head to spare go and touch the

Bhattacharya now." The officers were, therefore, frightened and dared not say or do anything. A little afterwards the Master regained the consciousness of the outer world, and seeing Mathur Babu standing there with the officers of the temple, he looked afraid like a boy and asked him. "Did I happen to do anything wrong when I had no control over myself?" Mathur saluted him and said, "No, father, you were reciting a hymn; I stood here lest some one should disturb you unthinkingly."

11. An example of how others could easily have spiritual progress in the company of the Master

Recalling his condition at the time of Sadhana, one day the Master said to us, "Those who used to come here at that time had the idea of God kindled very soon in the company of 'here' (i.e., himself). Two youths used to come from Baranagar; they were low by birth; may be Kaivarta or Tamli; they were very good; they had great love and reverence for 'here' and used to come very often. One day I was sitting with them under the Panchavati when a certain state came on one of them. I saw that his breast grew red, eyes deep red; streams of tears were rolling down; he could neither speak nor stand; he was just like one who had drunk two bottles of wine. That mood of his was in no way coming to an end. I was then afraid and said to the Mother. 'What have you done to him, Mother? People will say I have done something and brought about that condition in him. He has his father and others, he will have to go home just now.' I passed my hand over his chest while I was saying so to Mother. He then became somewhat calm and went home a little afterwards."

12. Mathur's vision of Siva and Sakti at the same time in the Master

We have heard from the holy mouth of the Master that at one time, in his infectious company, Mathur also got into a wonderful state and his reverence and devotion increased a thousandfold. Always indrawn and informed with the spiritual mood and oblivious of surroundings, the Master one day was pacing up and down the verandah extending east to west, to the north-east of his room. Mathur was then sitting by himself in one of the

rooms of the separate house which stood between the temple and the Panchavati and which is even now called the “Babus’ mansion”. The place where the Master was pacing was within an easy range of vision from where Mathur was sitting. Mathur was, therefore, sometimes, observing him walking in an indrawn mood, and thinking of him and sometimes speculating on the future trend of his own worldly affairs. The Master was not at all conscious of the fact that Mathur was sitting in the parlour observing him that way from time to time. And what would it have mattered even if he were conscious of it? The disparity between the domestic, social and other conditions of the two was so great that there was no cause for either of them feeling any concern for the other. Rather it would have been reasonable for the Master to feel hesitant and move away from the place had he known of Mathur’s presence there and not been merged in that divine mood which had made him inattentive. For how could the Master, who was an ordinary, insignificant, poor temple-priest, whom people knew to be foolish and mad, paying little heed to ritualistic formalities, and a butt of all ridicule, help feeling hesitant in the presence of Mathur, who was a wealthy, respectable, learned and intelligent Babu (gentleman), who might well be regarded as the proprietor of the temple and the whole estate of the Rani? That he happened to view the Master with a benevolent eye, was the only reason why the latter had not so far been driven away from the temple. But the event turned out to be something unthinkable and incomprehensible, for, Mathur himself ran up in a great flurry to the Master, bowed down to him, clasped with his hands both the feet of the Master and started weeping.

The Master said, “I asked, ‘What is this you are doing? You are a Babu, the son-in-law of the Rani, what will people think if they see you act like this? Be calm and get up.’ But did he give ear to it? Afterwards when he became collected, he narrated everything without any reserve. He had had a strange vision. He said, ‘Father, you were walking, and I saw distinctly that it was not you but my Mother in the temple over there as you were coming forward in this direction and that it was Mahadeva Himself immediately when you turned about. I thought at first that it was an optical illusion; I rubbed my eyes well and looked, but saw the same thing. This happened as often as I looked.’ He repeatedly said this and wept. I said, ‘Why, as a

matter of fact, I know nothing.' But would he listen? I was afraid lest some one should come to know of it and tell the Rani of it. What would she think? She might perhaps say that I put a spell on him. He became calm when I consoled him in various ways. Was it for nothing that Mathur did so much for me and loved me so much? Mother gave him many visions and experiences about 'here'. It was in fact written in Mathur's horoscope that his chosen Ideal, the divine Mother, would be so very compassionate on him that She would assume a body, accompany and protect him wherever he went."

13. The result of this vision

Henceforward Mathur's faith became very firm; for, it was for the first time that he got an indication that the Master was surely not an ordinary man; that the Master—towards whom he was attracted at first sight and whose mental attitudes he could very often detect and understand though others condemned him without understanding—was no other than the Mother of the universe Herself who, out of compassion for him, was residing in his body. It was from this time on that he believed that the One present in the stone image in the temple had perhaps assumed a body and was accompanying him wherever he went as it was written in his horoscope. From now on, Mathur's relation with the Master became especially intimate.

14. The evidence of the scriptures regarding Mathur's great good fortune

A great good fortune indeed smiled on Mathur. The scriptures say that not only ordinary people but even those who have become liberated in life cannot but experience the result of actions of both kinds, good and bad, as long as their bodies last. Ordinary men experience the results of their good and bad actions themselves. Now, who experiences the results of the good and bad actions done through the body of the liberated? For the liberated ones cannot do it inasmuch as the pride and egoism in them, which experience pleasure and pain, have for ever been completely burnt; who

then does it? The results of actions again are inevitable and some good and bad actions cannot but be performed by the bodies of persons liberated in life till those bodies fall like dry leaves from trees. The scriptures say that those unliberated persons who serve and love the liberated ones enjoy the results of the good actions of the latter and those who hate them suffer the results of their bad actions done through their bodies.[1] Who can say how great is the result of the loving devotional service rendered to the incarnations of God when great results are attained through the service of even ordinary liberated persons?

15. Great manifestation in the Master, day after day, of the mood of the spiritual teacher and Mathur's feelings on testing him

As days passed, Mathur's vision of the spiritual mood in the Master became clearer and his devotion to him firmer. Meanwhile there happened many events: An extremely painful feeling of a burning sensation in the Master's body on account of the separation from God and the treatment thereof; the Bhairavi Brahmani's advent at Dakshineswar and the demonstration, in the presence of a circle of Pandits invited by Mathur, with the aid of evidence from Vaishnava books, that the Master was an incarnation of God; the arrival of Tota Puri, the great Vedantin and the Master's initiation in Sannyasa; the coming of the aged mother of the Master to Dakshineswar and her stay there; and so on. But since the day on which the strange vision mentioned above took place, Mathur had become closely related with almost all the events that happened daily in the Master's life. Mathur made arrangements for the Master's treatment by Gangaprasad Sen, the famous physician of Calcutta, and Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar. The Master felt a strong loving desire to adorn the Mother with anklets and other ornaments of the same pattern as are used by ladies of the Uttar Pradesh; and Mathur had them made at once. Again at the time of practising the attitude of female friend of the divine Mother prescribed in Vaishnava books, he had a mind to put on the dress and ornaments such as those used by women and Mathuranath had a suit of diamond-cut ornaments, a Varanasi Sari, a wrapper and such other things brought immediately. When he came to know that the Master had a desire to go and

see the festival at Panihati, Mathur made immediately arrangements for everything; but that was not all; he himself went in disguise with a body-guard with him in order to protect the person of the Master lest he should be put to inconvenience on account of big crowds. Just as, on the one hand, we have heard of Mathur's wonderful service, so, on the other hand, we have also heard from the Master that he set dissolute women on him to see whether there arose in the Master's mind any impure feeling; that he proposed to transfer in writing all the trust property of the temple to the Master, at which in a state of divine anger the latter was about to beat him saying, "Do you want to make me a worldly man?"; and that Mathur was once saved from the danger of being very severely punished by the court on the charge of homicide in connection with a riot over his estate, when in order to escape from that danger he confessed to him everything and took refuge in him. We see from these facts that devotion to the Master was gradually taking firm roots in Mathur's mind. And how could it be otherwise? Just as the Master's wonderful character, unintelligible to human beings and rare even among the gods, stood all the tests of Mathur and appeared brighter as days passed, so, correspondingly, his never-failing selfless love completely captivated Mathur's heart. Mathur saw that he could not be deflected from the path of renunciation even by an inch by an offer of a property worth lacs of rupees, that one could not produce a change in his mind with the help of beautiful women, that he could not be led astray or made egotistic by an offer of worldly respect and reverence (for no greater respect can a man offer to another than to worship him as God); and that he did not want anything in the world for himself and yet he did not look down upon Mathur, in spite of knowing all the weaknesses of his character, loved him as more than his own and saved him from dangers again and again and was always thinking of his welfare in all respects. Mathur put this question to himself, "Why all these?" And he felt that though in a human body, the Master was a person of "the country where there is no night", that his renunciation was wonderful, his self-control, knowledge, devotion and actions were all wonderful, and, above all, his love and grace for a weak but vain mortal like himself was wonderful.

Another thing that Mathur felt simultaneously in his heart of hearts was the sweetness of that unique character. The Master remained that simple

boy though there was that unprecedented manifestation through him of divine power; there was not the slightest egotism! How strange! Like a boy of five, he did not conceal even a little of whatever thoughts arose in his mind. There was always the same mood within and without. Whatever was in the mind was wholly manifest in words and deeds in all sincerity; yet he never expressed anything which might be harmful to anybody even if he had to suffer bodily pain. Was such sweetness possible in man?

16. The priest Haldar's conduct at seeing Mathur's increasing devotion to the Master

Jealousy broke the heart of Haldar, the Kalighat priest of Mathur Babu, when he saw the latter's firm devotion to the Master. He thought the man had charmed the Babuby means of incantations etc. "Ah, is this rogue of a man going to spoil my long attempt at getting this fellow, the Babu, under my control? He again feigns the mood of a simple child! If he be so simple let him tell me the incantation of 'putting a man under a spell'. I had exhausted all my spells on this Babu and that fellow was about to obey the reins, when this interloper came between us."

Now with the increase in Mathur's devotion and reverence, he began to have a strong desire for keeping the Master's company constantly and for serving him more and more. Therefore he extended pressing invitations, brought him to his house at Janbazar in Calcutta and enjoyed his company from time to time. In the afternoon he would take him for a drive to the Eden Garden and other places of interest in Calcutta. He thought, "Can any and every plate, cup, etc., be considered fit for 'father' to eat and drink from?" Thinking so, he had a new set of gold and silver things made in which he offered him food and drink; he dressed him in excellent clothes and said, "It is you, father, who are the owner of all these (his estate and other property); I am nothing but the steward; consider how you eat and drink from these gold plates and silver cups and glasses and then leave them behind without even looking at them, and I have them cleaned and placed in a safe place, so that you may use them again. Then again, I have to be busy taking care of them and seeing that they are not broken or stolen."

17. The pitiable fate of a pair of Varanasi shawls

We heard from the Master, of the pitiable condition of a pair of Varanasi shawls which Mathur purchased for a thousand rupees at that time. To whom but the Master should he make a gift of them?—thinking thus, Mathur wrapped them around his holy person and was filled with great joy. The pair of shawls was indeed very valuable; for, their price even at that time being so high, such material is perhaps not at all available now. With the shawl on, the Master was at first going about very happily like a boy. He was looking at it again and again, calling others, showing it to them and telling them that Mathur had bought it for him at such a price. But the next moment the Master was like a boy in a different mood. He thought, "What is there in it? It contains nothing but an amount of goats' hair. It is also a modification of the five elements of which all things are made. And as regards prevention of cold—why, quilts and blankets are equally adequate. Like all other things, it is also not at all helpful for the realization of God. Rather, when one puts it on, one thinks oneself superior to others and one's mind turns away from God, since it increases pride and egotism. Ah, so many are its defects!" Thinking so and throwing the shawl on the ground, he said, "It does not help one in realizing Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. I spit on it." Saying so, he actually started spitting on it and then rubbed it against the dust on the ground. He was at last ready to set fire to it when some one happened to come there and recovered it from his hands. When Mathur Babu came to know of the fate of the shawl he did not at all feel sorry; on the contrary, he said, "Father did very well to do so."

18. The Master's non-attachment

It is very clear, from the events recorded above, on what a high plane the Master's mind always dwelt, in spite of Mathur's best endeavour to keep him in the midst of comforts and enjoyments. But wheresoever it might dwell, it was always filled with ecstasy. That mind saw Light only—the Light that casts no shade, that is not liable to waxing and waning and before which "the brightness of the sun, moon, and stars and the flash of lightning, let alone fire, are very dim, nay, almost dark".[1] While other minds saw

masses of darkness, his mind dwelt in that realm of Light. This other realm —the world filled with malice, hatred and crookedness, a permanent dwelling place of lust and anger—why, it was just a place to which he had come on a flying visit out of compassion; that was all. So, although he was living at Janbazar in Mathur Babu's house abounding in all kinds of luxuries and worldly enjoyments, the Master was the same Master, unattached, devoid of egoism, beside himself night and day with his own divine mood.

19. What the priest Haldar did at last

Just before dusk one day, the Master was lying in the divine semiconscious state in Mathur's Janbazar house. There was no one near him. The Master's ecstasy was coming to an end and he was gradually having a little consciousness of the outer world, when Haldar the priest happened to come in. When he saw the Master alone in that state, he thought that that was just the opportunity to serve his purpose. He approached him, looked around and said again and again while pushing about his holy person, "O Brahmin, tell me-how have you made him subservient to you? How is it that you are silent and feign ignorance? How did you captivate him? Ah! Why don't you speak?" Although he repeated the questions again and again, the Master did not or could not say anything, for he had not then the power to speak at all. Haldar then became angry, kicked him with great force and said, "Go to, rascal, you have not told me anything," and went away. Devoid of egotism, the Master made no mention of the incident since he knew that Mathur Babu was sure to be furiously angry and to inflict a very severe punishment on the priest, should he come to know of it. A short time after, the priest incurred Mathur's anger by committing some other offence and was dismissed, and then one day, in the course of conversation, the Master mentioned this fact to Mathur. Hearing it, Mathur said in anger and anguish, "Had I known it before, father, the Brahmin would have indeed lost his head."

20. Mathur's and his wife Jagadamba Dasi's devotion to the Master and the Master's relation with that family

If we want to know how deeply Mathur Babu and his wife felt in their heart of hearts the infinite grace of the Master as the spiritual teacher and how truly they surrendered themselves to him as God Himself, we have convincing evidence thereof in the fact that they did not conceal anything about themselves from the Master. Both of them knew and said, "Father is not a man (but God Himself); of what avail is it to conceal anything from him? He knows everything, the inmost secret of anybody's heart." These were not just empty words; they acted up to them. How many were the occasions on which they did everything—eating, drinking, walking, together with "father". What did it matter if "father" always and under all circumstances freely visited the inner apartment of their house? What mattered it again if he did not do so? For, on many occasions they got proof of the fact that he knew all kinds of thoughts in the minds of all. And "father" might very well be considered as good as a wall or some other insentient thing as regards the chief evil, the feeling of mental impurity arising from the free mixing of men and women. Was it not a fact that none of the ladies in the inner apartment had felt that kind of shyness and hesitation, as they did in the presence of other men? They felt that he was but one of them or a boy of five. We were surprised to hear many stories from the Master's own lips about the wonderful loving relation that existed between Mathur's family, including the members of the inner apartment, and the Master, who had converted himself thoroughly in thought and feeling into a female companion of the divine Mother by constant meditation for a long time on himself as such. Sometimes, he said, he would come out dressed as a woman in the company of the ladies of the family, with a Chamara in his hand to the place in the outer apartment where Mother Durga was being worshipped and would fan Her holy image. Sometimes again, when the husband of a young lady of the family arrived, he would adorn her with beautiful dress and ornaments. Just as, on account of his mood of the spiritual teacher, these ladies were firmly convinced of the Master's divine nature and revered him as such, even so were they thoroughly acquainted with his immaculate selfless love for them and poured out their heart's love to him and acted and behaved with him with a freedom rarely imaginable.

21. Contrary moods co-existed in the Master1. III. 1. 35 & 36.—Tr.

On the one hand, we find the manifestation of this divine love devoid of the slightest tinge of lust and self-interest, like that of a female friend, towards the women of Mathur's house in the inner apartment and, on the other, of his divine knowledge and incomparable intelligence in his behaviour with men and in circles of learned scholars outside; and we wonder how these various opposite moods co-existed[1] in him. Who is this multiform Master?

22. A meeting of the Pandits convened at Dakshineswar for getting a scriptural injunction about a broken image

At that time, at the Dakshineswar temple, the two images of Radha and Govinda used to be brought daily from the adjacent bedroom and seated on the throne in the main room of the temple and they were taken back to that bedroom for rest when the midday worship, food-offering, etc., were over. They were again brought to the throne from there after four in the afternoon and were taken back in the night after Arati at dusk and offering of food etc. One day the marble floor of the temple became slippery because water had been spilt on it and, as the priest was taking the image of Govinda to the bedroom, he fell down and a leg of the image got broken. There arose a great stir; the priest himself had got hurt and was again-trembling with fear. The news reached the proprietors. What would be the upshot of it all? The worship could not be performed with a broken image. What was the way out now? Rani Rasmani and Mathur Babu respectfully invited to a meeting all the famous scholars of the city to ascertain what means should be adopted. The opinions of those scholars who were unable to be present owing to some business or other were also being collected. It was a matter of great sensation and there was also an unnecessary waste of money over the Pandits to maintain their prestige at the time of farewell. The Pandits opened their books, applied snuff, so to say, to the root of their intellects and gave the prescription, "Let the broken image be immersed in the water of the Ganga and a new image be installed in its stead." And a sculptor was given orders to make a new image.

23. The Master's decision and the last word on the matter

At the close of the meeting Mathur Babu said to the Rani, "But 'father' has not been consulted on the matter; what he says must be ascertained." Saying so he asked "father" for his opinion. "If", said the Master while in ecstasy, "any one of the sons-in-law of the Rani had broken his leg owing to a fall, would he have been forsaken and another person placed in his stead or would proper arrangement have been made for his treatment? Let that procedure be followed here also; let the broken parts of the leg of the image be joined and the worship continued; why should the image be thrown away?" All were surprised to hear of the prescription. Ah, nobody had sufficient brains for this very plain reasoning. If it is to be admitted that the image is living on account of the divine manifestation of Govinda, that manifestation must surely depend on the deep love and devotion in the heart of the devotee and His grace or compassion for him. So, why is that manifestation not possible in a broken image as well, if there are love, reverence and devotion in the heart? And the merit or demerit of the broken image can by no means touch that manifestation. Moreover, can the love for the image in which the worship of the divine Lord has been performed and to which one's heart-felt love has been offered so long, vanish from the heart of a true devotee simultaneously with the breaking of a particular limb of that image. The Vaishnava teachers again teach that devotees should serve the divine Lord in the same way in which they themselves like to be served. They think that the divine Lord loves what one oneself likes in any particular condition and inculcate upon us that kind of service. The prescription to give up the image is not proper from that standpoint too. Therefore, the ban on worshipping the Deity in a broken image which is found in the Smritis is surely meant for the novice who is devoid of love for God and has just begun to tread the path of devotion. Some of the proud scholars, however, differed from the Master's decision, some others did not clearly express their views lest their farewell gifts should suffer reduction, some others again who had acquired a little true knowledge and devotion through learning, very highly praised the decision of the Master when they came to know of it. The Master, with his own hands, joined the broken leg of the image afterwards and the worship of it went on as before. When the sculptor made a new image and brought it, it was merely placed on one side

of the temple of Govinda but was never duly installed. After the passing away of the Rani and Mathur Babu, their descendants made preparations from time to time for the installation of that new image, but were compelled to put it off on account of some worldly mishap or other on each such occasion. The new image of Govinda is therefore, preserved in that condition even now.[1]

Footnote

1. A proverb current in Bengal meaning introducing something irrelevant to the subject under discussion,—Tr.

1. This current proverb (in Northern India) has for its source the following story: There was a holy man of the Vairagi denomination who travelled from one place of pilgrimage to another for a long time. He himself carried the bundle of his paraphernalia of necessary articles like the metal cooking-pot and water-pot. One day the holy man thought that he might be free from the trouble of carrying the bundle if he could get a horse. As soon as the thought occurred to him, he began to go round to secure a horse on charity, crying out, “O Rama, please let me have a horse.” An army of the king of the country happened then to pass that way. On the way a mare foaled. “Whew,” thought the rider of the mare, “ the army will march from here immediately; the mare can walk, but how can I take the young one that is just born?” After a little deliberation, as soon as he went out in search of a man to carry the foal, he met with the holy man, crying out, “O Rama, please let me have a horse.” And finding him strong, the officer without any other consideration forced him to carry the young one. At this turn of events, the holy man was perplexed and began to repeat again and again, “Rama took it contrariwise, far from the horse carrying me and my bundle I am now to carry this foal,”

1. The metaphor is from the Hindu Purana. The story is: While Bhagiratha was bringing down Ganga on earth, she got into a place in the Himalayas surrounded on all sides by rocks, which she failed to pierce through or overflow. In her plight, she asked Bhagiratha to go to Indra's elephant Airavata and to request him to pierce the rock with his tusk to make an outlet for her. When Airavata was approached with the request, he made an indecent proposal in his vanity. When from the sad face of her child—for Bhagiratha looked upon her as his mother— Ganga understood the matter, she sent him again to Airavata with a counterproposal that if he could withstand the strength of but three waves of hers, she would consent to his proposal. Airavata blinded by his vanity took his proposal to be already agreed upon, came and pierced the rock but could not withstand the very first wave of Ganga and was carried off. Ganga=Mandakini.—Tr.

1. There are twelve Siva temples facing the courtyard of the Kali temple at Dakshineswar.

2. The hymn is called after the first word in it, Mahimnah.

1. “Similarly there is the reading in the Shatyayani recension, ‘his sons come by the patrimony, friends, the results of his good actions and foes, those of his bad actions.’ Again similarly the Kaushitakins read, he (the man of knowledge when dead) shakes off the results of his good and bad actions by that (by the strength of his knowledge); his dear gnaties, relatives, enjoy the results of his good actions and haters, those of his bad actions.”

Commentary of Sankara on the *Vedanta Aphorisms.* III. 3. 26 and 27.

1. *Katha Upanishad* 2. 2. 15 and *Mundaka Upanishad* 2. 2. 10.

1. III. 1. 35 & 36.—Tr.

1. Afterwards the new image was installed.—Tr.

CHAPTER VII
GRACE BESTOWED ON MATHUR IN THE MOOD OF THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER

> I am the Self residing in the hearts of all creatures; I am the beginning, the middle and the end of beings.
>
> —Gita X. 20.

1. In the company of the Master, Mathur celebrated the worship of Mother Durga at his Janbazar house

There was great rejoicing that year on the occasion of the worship of Mother Durga at the Janbazar house of Mathur. For, although year after year the same indescribable bliss was shared by all—the old and the young, the ladies and gentlemen—here was something special this year at the time of the worship of the divine Mother of the universe—"father" had graced the occasion with his holy presence, and had enhanced that bliss a thousand times. There was, therefore, no limit to their rejoicings. Just as a child, beside itself with joy and free from fear, makes importunate requests to its mother and without a cause laughs, dances and does such other things before her, so did "father", the unique child of the divine Mother, behave under the influence of his divine mood incessantly experiencing the direct manifestation of the Mother in the image. And the image appeared to be living and smiling and to be made of light. Again, the manifestation of the Mother in that image and the manifestation of the same Mother in the Master's divine body and mind combined together to fill the atmosphere of the worship hall with an indescribable and indefinable divine Presence, felt even by the dullest minds. This evident Presence in the worship hall appeared to have illumined not only the hall, but the hearts of every

member and every nook and corner of the entire house and lent a unique beauty everywhere.

And it could not but be so. For, just as the Rajasika devotion of the wealthy Mathur left nothing to be desired in the collection and arrangement of the material requisites of the worship (such as flowers, fruits, roots and sweets; the decoration of the image with valuable clothes and ornaments, and of the walls, doors and floors of the house with green leaves, flowers, flags and buntings; and the provision of musical instruments, such as flutes and the like), so again the divine spirit in the wonderful Master, penetrating all these inert material things, had indeed breathed a joyous life into them all. The calm beauty suggested by the ochre cloth of the austere monks in the sublime setting of the grand clumps of the evergreen deodars in the snow-covered Himalayas; the tender beauty of a beautiful suckling on the breast of a beautiful mother; and the wonderful glow that pure thoughts and sentiments produce in a beautiful face—had all combined together in the house of Mathur Babu. Need it be said that all these were due to the dawning of a unique good fortune on Mathur? Need it be said that the master of the house and his wife, in spite of their being busy in making proper arrangements for things pertaining to the worship, were constantly being filled with an indescribable bliss, and were feeling in their heart of hearts the grace and beauty of the holy atmosphere?

The worship during the day came to an end. They just snatched a little time somehow to offer flowers with great delight at the holy feet of "father" and of the divine Mother.

2. The Master's Bhavasamadhi and personal beauty

It was dusk. Now the Arati of the Mother of the universe would begin. "Father" was then in the inner apartment and had completely forgotten his male body under the influence of a maddening spiritual mood. The only thought that expressed itself through his words and actions was, that he had all his lives and throughout the ages, been a woman companion of the divine Mother. The divine Mother was his life, his mind, his all in all; it was for the service of the Mother alone that he had assumed a body and was living his mode of life. The Master's face was brightened with spiritual

emotion and love of the Mother, and his lips were beautified with a unique smile; his looks, the movements of his hands and feet, and his gestures resembled those of women. The Master was dressed in the beautiful silken cloth given by Mathur Babu and he had put it on in the manner of a sari. Who would say that he belonged to the male sex? The beauty and complexion of the Master at that time were so charming that they overflowed, as it were, all around. That complexion assumed a brighter hue when there was a spiritual emotion, as if a light came out of his body. People could not turn their eyes away when they saw that beauty in wonder. We have heard from the Holy Mother that the colour of his body and that of the golden amulet (symbolizing his chosen Ideal) which he used to put on his holy person mingled together as it were and became one. We have also heard from the Master himself, "Ah! There was such beauty then that people used to stare at me; the chest and the face used always to be red, as if a light emanated from the body. As people used to stare, I always kept the body covered with a thick wrapper and asked the divine Mother importunately, 'Here is your external beauty, Mother, please take it back and give me internal beauty.' I used to pass my hand over the body and slapping it again and again say, 'Go in, go in'. As the result of this the exterior became pale, as you see it."

3. Large gatherings of people at Kamarpukur on account of the Master's physical beauty

We remember another event in the Master's life in connection with his personal beauty. At that time the Master used to go every year to Kamarpukur and spend there three or four months in the rainy season and then return to Calcutta. He went sometimes to the house of his nephew Hriday at the village of Sihar. The path leading to Sihar lay through Jayramvati, the village of his father-in-law. The people of that village made importunate requests to him to stay there for a few days, to which he agreed. Hriday, who was highly devoted to him, used to be always with him and served him in every way.

During the period of the Master's stay at Kamarpukur, there used to be crowds of people there continually from morning to evening in order to see

him and hear a few words from his lips. The women of the neighbourhood finished sweeping and cleaning their houses very early in the morning and came with pitchers on their hips to take water home after their bath. And placing the pitchers on the bank of the Haldar pond near the Master's house they came to the Chatujyes' house[1] and sat there. They spent an hour or so in talks with the Master and the women of his house and then went to bathe. That happened every day. And if sweetmeats or other special preparations had been made the previous night in their houses, they kept portions of them for him before using them themselves and took that opportunity to bring and give them to him. Fond of merry-making, he sometimes said to them on seeing them come when it was scarcely dawn: "The Gopis met Sri Krishna at Vrindavan at various times in various ways; we are told that they had their 'pasture meeting' at the time of going to the bank of the Yamuna to bring water, the 'sunset meeting' when the divine Lord returned with the cows after grazing them, then the 'dance meeting' at night and so on. So may I ask if it is your 'bath-time meeting'?" The women rolled with laughter on the ground to hear it. The men of the village came to the Master after the women had gone home to do their day-time cooking and other duties. They sat and talked with him as long as they liked. The women came again in the afternoon and some of the men-folk also came in the night. Again men and women from distant places came very often in the afternoon and returned before sunset. Thus there used to be gatherings of people like those during the Car festival (Ratha) and the 'swing' festival (Dol).

4. An incident regarding the Master's personal beauty and his humility

Once there was a similar arrangement for his going to Jayramvati and Sihar from Kamarpukur. As the Master used constantly to be in ecstasy, his body became very soft like that of a boy or a woman. He could not travel even a small distance without a palanquin or a carriage. This was why a palanquin was brought for him to go to Sihar via Jayrambati. Hriday made ready to accompany him. In a red silken cloth and with the gold amulet symbolizing his chosen Ideal on his arm, he came chewing betel after his noon-day meal to get into the palanquin; he saw there was a big crowd on

the road near the palanquin. Men and women were standing all round. Surprised to see it he asked Hriday, “What is such a big crowd for, Hriday?”

Hriday: “For what else? You will go there today; they (showing the people) will not have an opportunity of seeing you for some time; this is why they all have come to see you.”

The Master: “But they see me every day; do they see anything new today?

Hriday: “You look very handsome when you are dressed in silk cloth, chew betel and both your lips shine with a ruddy hue; that is why they want to see you; what else?”

The Master’s mind was filled with an unprecedented feeling. He thought, “Alas! They are all occupied with this ephemeral external beauty only and do not want to see Him who is residing within!” He had all along a sincere repugnance to physical beauty. It increased a thousandfold by this incident. He said, “What? Men to crowd thus to see a man! Hence! I will not go anywhere; for people will crowd thus wherever I go.” At once he went direct to his room in the inner apartment of the house, took off his dress and sat down, worried and afflicted. Filled with humility, the Master did not go to Jayramvati and Sihar that day. Hriday and all others of the household exhorted him in various ways, but all efforts were of no avail. Just once imagine, O reader, what a mean and contemptible idea this divine personage had of his own body! And think of ourselves; how mad after beauty we are! What rubbing and massaging! Looking glasses, combs, razors, brushes, powdered pulse, soap, and what a profusion of essences and pomades; and again, in imitation of the West, what an excessive indulgence in the delusion that this “cage of bones and flesh”[1] is our self and what an inordinate scramble for plunging ourselves headlong into utter ruination through that! To be neat and clean, to have a pure and holy mind; and this excess—do you, my dear sir, take them to be the same? Let us, however, resume our topic.

5. Jagadamba Dasi’s cleverness in bringing to an end the Master’s ecstasy

The Arati of the divine Mother was about to begin, but that ecstasy of the Master did not come to an end. Srimati Jagadamba Dasi thought she would somehow or other bring the Master to normal consciousness and go to witness the Arati with the other ladies of the house; but she was at a loss to know what she should do when she found that the Master's ecstasy did not end and she did not think it reasonable to leave him alone and go. She deliberated, "What shall I do? Once the Arati music begins, any one whom I might leave here to look after him would surely run to the worship hall there as fast as her legs would carry her. And 'father' also cannot take care of himself when he is in the grip of spiritual emotions. Thus devoid of normal consciousness, it happened once that he fell on a live charcoal and was not conscious of it. It was only after a great deal of care and treatment that the sore could be healed. If I leave him alone, any similar disaster might happen on this happy occasion, what then? And what will my husband think?" She was thinking thus when a plan suggested itself to her. Taking out hurriedly all her precious ornaments and putting them on his person she began to whisper again and again into his ears, "Let us go 'father'; Mother's Arati is to begin soon, will you not fan Mother with the Chamara?"

6. The manner of the Master's coming down from the state of Samadhi is in accordance with the scriptures

It was always observed that, however much the Master might have been devoid of normal consciousness under the influence of spiritual moods—however far his mind might have travelled from those things, persons or ideals on which his mind had begun to be concentrated—it was invariably attracted back to and understood those forms or ideas, if the names or expressions connected with those ideas or forms were uttered into his ears a few times. That such are the nature and behaviour of a concentrated mind is recorded briefly, if not at length, in the Yoga scriptures of Patanjali and others. The reader well versed in the scriptures, therefore, will not take long to understand such behaviour of the Master's mind. And those who have as a result of many virtuous actions attained a little of mental concentration in

their lives will more easily understand it. Let us, therefore, follow the subject of which we were speaking.

7. The Master fanned the Goddess Durga with a Chamara in the spiritual attitude of a woman friend

The words of Jagadamba Dasi entered the Master's ears. And immediately he regained his normal consciousness to a great extent; and beside himself with joy in partial consciousness, he accompanied her. No sooner had they arrived at the worship hall than the Arati commenced. Surrounded by the ladies, the Master began to fan the image with a Chamara. The ladies stood on one side of the hall and the gentlemen including Mathur Babu on the other and were all witnessing the Arati of the divine Mother. As soon as Mathur Babu's eyes fell on the ladies, he saw that a lady stood near his wife and was fanning the Mother with a Chamara, radiating wonderful beauty from her person, dress, and ornaments. Although he looked again and again he could not know who she was. He thought at last that she might be a friend of Jagadamba, some rich man's wife who had perhaps come by invitation.

The Arati was over. The ladies saluted the divine Mother, went back to the inner apartments and were busy doing their duties. In that state of partial consciousness, the Master went into the inner apartment with Mathur Babu's wife and came gradually to normal consciousness. He then took off the dress and ornaments, came out and sat with the menfolk and raising various religious topics, charmed all by his lucid explanation and apt illustrations.

8. Unable to recognize the Master in that state, Mathur asked his wife

A little afterwards, Mathur Babu went to the inner apartment on some business and asked his wife, in the course of the conversation, about the lady who had been standing near her and fanning the Mother with a Chamara at the time of the Arati. Mathur Babu's wife smiled and said in reply, "Could you not know who she was? 'Father' in ecstasy was fanning the divine Mother thus; that is quite possible, for one cannot know 'father'

to be a man when he puts on dress and ornaments like a woman." Saying so she told Mathur Babu everything from beginning to end. He was very much surprised and said, "This is why I say, 'Who is able to recognize 'father' even in trifling matters if he does not allow himself to be recognized?' Don't you see! I could not recognize him today, though I see him and am with him for all the twenty-four hours."

9. Vijaya, the tenth day of the bright fortnight of the lunar month of Aswin

The seventh, eighth and ninth day of the fortnight passed in great joy. It was the morning of the tenth day (Vijaya Dasami). The priest was hastily finishing the Mother's brief worship of the day, for the looking glass had to be immersed[1] at the moment prescribed in the almanac. The image itself was to be immersed after sunset. There descended, as it were, a shadow of sadness over the minds of all the household of Mathur Babu, and there was a feeling of an indescribable, an undefined fear of an inevitable immediate separation from a very dear person. A penumbra of such sadness is always attached to even the purest bliss of this world! It is perhaps according to this law that the pain due to the separation from God is felt from time to time even in the life of the greatest lover of God. And even the hearts of strong people among us melt into tears when we go to immerse the image on the Vijaya day. The case of Mathur's wife needs no mention. Since the morning she had often been removing the tears from her eyes with the end of her cloth, while she was engaged in her duties.

10. Enjoying a divine bliss, Mathur was not conscious of the approaching moment of immersion

In the outer apartment, however, Mathur had yet no idea of the approaching moment. His heart was swelling with joy as before. Having brought the Mother of the universe to his house and enjoying the blessed company and grace of "father", Mathur was experiencing a fulness of joy within himself and was forgetful of the outer world. Who was interested in what was to happen in the world? And where was the need? His days would

undoubtedly pass in that way in the company of the divine Mother and "father". Just at that time word came from the priest, that the "immersion ceremony" of the Mother was just about to take place, and would the Babu be pleased to come down and pay his obeisance and reverence to Her?

11. Mathur's determination not to immerse the image of the Mother

Mathur could not even understand at first what was said to him. When he came to understand it after questioning those about him, he became conscious of the fact that it was the tenth day, the Vijaya. And as soon as knowledge dawned upon him, he was stunned, as if he had received a severe blow on his head. Filled with grief and pain, he began to think, "Mother to be immersed today? Why? By the grace of 'father' and the divine Mother I stand in need of nothing; the want of mental bliss that was there has, I feel, been removed by the holy advent of the Mother to my house. Why should I then court dejection by immersing the Mother? No, I cannot break up this 'fair of bliss'. Oh! The immersion of Mother! I feel suffocation even to think of it." Mathur was thus revolving such thoughts in his mind and shedding tears.

In the meanwhile, time was nearly up. The priest was sending word every now and then, "Babu, please do come once and stand, the Mother's immersion will take place." Mathur felt much annoyed and sent word, "I will never allow anyone to immerse the Mother. The worship will continue as it is going on now. If anybody immerses the Mother without my approval, a grievous disaster is sure to happen, there may even be bloodshed and murder!" Saying so, Mathur sat in a very stern mood. Seeing his master in this strange mood, the terrified servant moved away, and going to the worship hall told the priest everything. All held their breath!

12. Mathur's reply to the persuasion

All of them consulted together and sent those members of the household who were held in respect by Mathur to persuade him to agree to the immersion. They also went and tried, but failed to change his mind. The Babu said, "Why? I shall perform the daily worship of the Mother. As I

have the means therefor by Her grace, why should I bid good-bye to Her?" What, therefore, could they do? They came back and arrived at the conclusion that his brain was deranged. That conclusion apart, what was now the way out? Everyone of the household knew the rash Mathur very well. Everyone knew that when angry he bade goodbye to his reason and understanding. Who was going to incur his displeasure by ordering the immersion ceremony of the Deity without his approval? Nobody came forward to do that. Exaggerated news reached the mistress of the house. Overwhelmed with apprehension and alarm she requested the Master to try to persuade him. For who, but "father", was there to save them from danger? Who knew if the Babu's brain had not really been deranged?

13. The Master persuaded Mathur

The Master came and saw that Mathur was deeply absorbed in thought and pacing up and down the room with his face sombre and eyes red. As soon as he saw the Master, Mathur came up to him and said, "Let them say whatever they like, 'father', I cannot bid good-bye to Mother before I breathe my last. I have told them I shall perform Her daily worship. How can I do without Mother?"

Passing his hand over Mathur's heart, the Master said, "Oh! Is this your fear? But who says that you will have to be without Mother? Moreover, where will She go even if the ceremony of immersion be gone through? Can a mother afford to be away from her child? Sitting in the outer hall She accepted your worship these three days; She will now be nearer to you, sit in your heart, and accept your worship."

14. The strange power of the words and touch of the Master

It is difficult to explain what a marvellous charming power there was in the words and touch of the Master! It was seen on many occasions that a visitor was engaged in a heated discussion with the Master and was by no means inclined to accept his conclusion, when the latter would cleverly touch the other's person and immediately the strong tendencies of his mind due to which he had held contrary views would vanish, leading him to wind

up the arguments and to accept the Master's view unreservedly. He said to some of us on this matter: "Do you know why I touch people that way when I speak? I do it, so that the power by virtue of which that obstinacy is persisting in them might lose its force and they might realize the truth rightly and accurately." We have seen and heard many instances of how, by a mere touch, he used to diminish, and sometimes even destroy for ever, the strength of powers standing as obstacles in the others' path to the realization of truth, by drawing those powers to himself. We have noticed that the very words which, coming out of other people's mouth, produced no emotion whatever in anybody's mind, coming out from the Master's mouth, have made deep impressions on others' minds and changed the courses of their lives from that very moment. We shall try to tell the reader these things on some other occasion. Now let us go on with Mathur Babu's story.

15. How Mathur regained his normal consciousness

By the touch and words of the Master, Mathur gradually regained his normal consciousness. We do not know if he regained it as the result of any kind of vision produced by the Master's will and touch. But we think this probable. It seems to us that the joy in his heart increased a hundredfold only because he saw the form of the divine Mother existing in the cavern of his heart illumining it with an effulgence never known before, as a result of which his keen eagerness to retain the image diminished. A true spiritual teacher thus draws the attention of the disciple to the splendour of a higher ideal. The spiritual moods and visions of a lower plane then fall off naturally from his mind.

16. The firmness of Mathur's faith in the Master was the result of his having tested him

There is no doubt that Mathur's devotion to and reliance upon the Master were the results of his variously testing him, strange though it might appear to us. He tested the Master in every manner, by offering him wealth, beautiful women and unlimited mastery over himself and all his household as also by freely spending money on his relatives, such as Hriday and

others, and found that he was, unlike others, above all temptations. He saw also that before the Master's discerning eye, the cloak of insincere love and devotion could not conceal its real nature for long. On the contrary, if, after committing misdeeds like homicide and other heinous offences, anybody sincerely and open-heartedly took refuge in him, he pardoned him all his offences and cordially accepted him, granting him the power of recognizing and comprehending higher ideals day by day. He would find to his surprise that what had been impossible became possible for him now by virtue of a wonderful unknown power, which was the Master.

17. Mathur's desire of having ecstasy

Keeping the company of the Master and observing his experience of unlimited bliss, Mathur, though a worldly man, once had a desire to experience and understand for himself what that experience was. He then had the firm conviction that " 'father' could make all persons experience it at his mere will. For the Master himself was all the Deities—Siva, Kali, Krishna, Rama. Where was then any obstacle to divine visions? Was it strange then that he could show by his grace to anyone any of his own forms?" This conviction was, in truth, a matter of no small wonder. All those who were in his intimate company came gradually to have that conviction. Everyone thought that he could by his will even make the impossible possible, that he could make anyone realize any truth of the spiritual world. It is ordinarily difficult for one to produce, such a conviction by virtue of one's spiritual power and strength of pure character in the mind of even a single individual, not to speak of many. This is possible with the incarnations of God alone. This is no less than a proof of their being incarnations of God. And they know that in the name of incarnations much perjury and knavery will prevail on earth, this realm of untruthfulness, craftiness and fraud; and proclaim solemnly to the effect: "When I shall go beyond the ken of mortal eyes many hypocrites will appear before you and say, 'I am an incarnation of God, I am the refuge and saviour of weak mortals.' Beware of them all." [1]

18. He prayed to the Master for it

As soon as Mathur felt that desire he went to the Master and said importunately, “Father, you must do something that I may have ecstasy.” We confidently imagine that the Master said to him what he used to say to all others on similar occasions; “Oh, it will surely come at the right time. Does a seed sprout into a tree as soon as it is sown and can the fruits be eaten immediately? Why? You are all right. You are keeping a fine balance between God and the world. If you have those things your mind will give up the world; who will then take care of your estate and other property, which is sure to be plundered and enjoyed by all and sundry? What will you do then?”

19. The Master dissuaded him by quoting the example of the Gopis and Uddhava

But who gave ear to those words that day? Mathur was importunity itself; “father” must make him attain ecstasy. When he found that such dissuasion produced no result, the Master raised the topic to a higher pitch. “Ah,” said he, “do devotees want to see Him? It is the privilege to serve that they want. Direct experiences produce fear through the knowledge of the powers of God and love for Him gets suppressed. Krishna went away to Mathura and the Gopis were overwhelmed with the pang of separation and he sent Uddhava to console them. Uddhava was a person of Vedantic knowledge. He could not appreciate the spiritual attitude of the Vrindavan people, viz., shedding tears, feeding and dressing Krishna, and the like. He looked down upon the pure love of the Gopis as something inferior and within Maya. Uddhava also would learn by experience—that was also another consideration in sending him. Uddhava came and began to console the Gopis, ‘Why do you behave this way and call on Krishna repeatedly? Do you not know that he is the divine Lord and is all-pervading? It cannot be that He is at Mathura and is not at Vrindavan. Instead of giving yourselves up to sorrow and despair, just once shut your eyes and see that that One, dark-blue like a newly-formed cloud, playing on His flute and with the garland of wild flowers on, is always there within your heart’. ‘Uddhava,’ said the Gopis, when they heard this, ‘You are a friend of Krishna and a man of knowledge, and you to speak like this! Are we persons given to

meditation or persons of knowledge? Or have we got Him by practising Japa, austerities and so on like the Rishis and Munis? We actually adorned and beautified Him, fed and dressed Him; and yet are we to do these acts in meditation? Can we do so at all? Have we that mind with which we can meditate and perform Japa? It was long ago dedicated at the lotus feet of Krishna. Have we got anything to call our own so that we can attribute' I '-consciousness to it and perform Japa?' Uddhava was surprised to be told so. He then understood the depth and nature of the love of the Gopis for Krishna, saluted them as his spiritual teachers and returned. Consider—do true devotees want to see Him? They feel the highest bliss in His service only. Beyond that they do not want anything, visions and the like; they hamper their spiritual relation of love with Him."

When Mathur could not be dissuaded even by this, the Master said, "I know nothing, my dear; however, I shall tell Mother and She will do whatever She likes."

20. Mathur's ecstasy and his prayer to the Master

Mathur then had ecstasy after a few days. The Master told us, "He sent for me. When I went I found that he was, as it were, a different man: his eyes were red and tears were flowing; speaking of God he was shedding floods of tears. And his heart was trembling with quick pulsation. When he saw me he clasped both my feet and said, 'Excuse me, father, I admit my defeat; I have been in this condition for the last three days; I cannot apply my mind to worldly affairs in spite of all my efforts; everything is getting spoilt everywhere. Please take back the ecstasy conferred by you; I don't want it'. 'Why,' said I, 'did you not pray for ecstasy?' He then said, 'Yes, I did so and there is also bliss in it; but of what avail is it? Everything is going to be spoilt on this side. This ecstasy of yours, father, becomes you only. We don't want all these things. Please take them back.' I then laughed and said, 'I told you so previously.' 'Yes, father,' said he, 'but did I understand then so clearly that something like a ghost would possess me and that I should have to take every step according to its whim all the twenty-four hours and could do nothing even if I had a mind to?' I then passed my hand on his chest."

21. None but a man of renunciation can maintain Bhavasamadhi

It will not do simply to have Bhavasamadhi. How many are the people who can bear the power of its urge; how many can retain it? It is impossible to do so, as long as there is the slightest worldly desire. That is why the scriptures ask the pilgrim on the path to the realization of God to be free from desires even at the outset. "Tyagenaike amritatwamanasuh,"[1]"it is detachment and renunciation alone that can give immortality." A Samadhi of a lower plane may be had by the momentary exuberance of emotions, but it cannot be maintained in a man in whom masses of desires for wealth, respect and the like abound. Acharya Sankara says:[2]

"The crocodile of desire clutches by the neck those who proceed to cross the sea of the world without taking with them the antidote of detachment for their journey; makes them turn round and forcibly drowns them in the unfathomable waters of that sea."

22. An example of this—the story of a young devotee brought to the Kasipur garden

We add below one of the many instances of this truth we had observed while we were with the Master. He was then staying at the Kasipur garden. One day a few Vaishnava devotees came with an absent-minded young man. We never saw them come before. The reason why they came was that they wanted to show the young man to the Master and know the Master's opinion about the strange spiritual state that had suddenly come upon him. Word was sent to the Master and he saw the young man. The face and chest of the young man were red; and he was seen taking the dust of the feet of all with humility. As he was repeating God's names he was having frequent tremors and horripilations and both his eyes were reddish and a little swollen owing to an incessant flow of tears. He was of dark-blue complexion; was neither fat nor thin and had a tuft of hair on his head. His face and limbs were graceful and well-built. He was wearing a white cloth without borders which was not very clean and had, we remember, no wrapper for his upper garment and no shoes. He seemed quite indifferent to the cleanliness or preservation of his body. We were told the high-strung

state had come on him suddenly when one day he was singing the praises of Hari. Since then he had been virtually taking no food and having no sleep; he was weeping day and night and rolling on the ground because God was not realized. He had been in that state during the last few days.

23. The Master's power of recognizing the changes brought about by an excess of spiritual emotions. The spiritual teacher is indeed "the physician of the world-disease"

We have seen in nobody but the Master such a power of noticing and diagnosing physical changes produced in man by the prevalence of spiritual emotions. The spiritual teacher has been described in the *Guru-gita* and other books as "the physician of the world-disease." We did not at all understand that such hidden meaning was there in it before we had the blessing of meeting the Master. We had no notion of the fact that Guru was indeed the physician of mental diseases and could diagnose at first sight the modifications of the human mind due to the influence of spiritual emotions. What is more, if, from the reading of the external signs, the Guru finds them favourable, he prescribes methods following which the aspirants can scale higher altitudes of spirituality. And if he finds them unfavourable, he devises means which slowly remove them without harming the aspirants. It is only because we saw the Master doing this every day that we have a firm conviction on this matter in our minds. When Swami Vivekananda attained the Nirvikalpa Samadhi for the first time, we saw the Master prescribe immediately, "Do not take food out of anybody's hands now for some days; cook your own food. In this state one can at most take food out of one's own mother's hands; this state gets destroyed if one takes food out of anyone else's hands. But there is no such fear when afterwards it becomes natural." When he saw Gopala's mother suffering physically, on the increase of the affection of the humour of wind in her body, he said, "That windy humour of yours is nothing but the humour of Hari; what will you occupy yourself with if it goes? It must continue. But when you feel the pain unbearable eat something." When he saw that a certain devotee's mind could not merge in God forgetting the body owing to a firm habit of observing external purification and attachment thereto, he prescribed

privately, “Call on God once by making a mark on your forehead with the clay of the place where people answer nature’s calls.” Seeing that an unrestrained bodily agitation during Sankirtan was adverse to the progress of some one, he scolded him and said, “Ah, you wretch, you have come to show off your spiritual emotions to me! Do spiritual emotions ever produce these agitations? One then merges completely and becomes motionless. What is this? Be calm and tranquil. (To the others) Do you know what kind of spiritual emotions these are? They resemble a Chhatak[1] of milk being boiled in a cauldron over the fire. One thinks it to be a large quantity, a cauldronful. You then take it down to find not a single drop there; the very little that was there has stuck to the sides of the cauldron.” Perceiving the mental inclination of some one else he said, “Enjoy to your heart’s content, you fellow; but don’t think that you do all these as acts of religion.”

24. The Master’s opinion on the condition of the young man

The moment the Master saw the young man he said, “Ah! It is, I find, the commencement of the Madhurabhava.[2] But this state will not last; he cannot retain it. It is very difficult to retain this state. As soon as a woman is touched (lustfully) this spiritual mood will vanish.” Be that as it may, the devotees who came felt a little consoled when they knew from the Master’s words that the young man’s brain was not deranged, and went back. A little afterwards news reached us that the Master’s prediction was perfectly fulfilled; the young man had been overcome by the fateful calamity. He had ascended fortunately to a very high plane indeed owing to the momentary excitement of Sankirtan, but alas, he came down to as low a plane owing to its reaction. Swami Vivekananda always favoured devotion with discrimination and taught people to practise that kind of devotion lest otherwise they should fall victims to that danger.

25. The Master used to speak out every thought frankly to Mathur and always sought his advice

Just as there was nothing to be concealed by Mathur from “father”, so, “father” always had, except, at the time of ecstasy, an attitude towards

Mathur like that of a child towards its mother or of a friend towards his friend —of speaking out everything, taking counsel, accepting advice cordially and depending on his love. We have already told the reader the scriptural statement that when a person ascends to the highest step of the supreme knowledge, he appears in the eyes of the ordinary people to be in the state of a mad person, or of a boy. What is more, as Sankara, the teacher adored by the world, has left behind him in his clear writings, such a person never loses his poise, whether he happens to be enjoying incomparable kingly wealth, or barely maintains himself by the food obtained by begging, having for his only possession a pair of Kaupinas to put on, whether he remains in a state which people in general regard as one of great misery or of happiness. Always dwelling in the bliss of the Self, he is absolutely content in the Self alone. Sankara says:[1]

"A liberated person roams in the world sometimes like an ignorant man, sometimes like a learned one and at other times again like one having the opulence of a king. He sometimes appears to be like one mad, and sometimes like one calm, quiet and intelligent. At other times again he is seen to be living like a boa, without asking even for the means to meet his daily needs such as food etc. Sometimes he is very much respected, in some places he is insulted and again in some other places he lives entirely unknown. He remains thus filled with supreme bliss, and steady under all circumstances." When this is the case even with ordinary liberated persons, is it anything more than expected, that the supremely glorious incarnations of God remain steady under all circumstances and behave like children? Such behaviour, therefore, of the Master with Mathur is not at all surprising. But it was not a small good fortune for Mathur to have been so intimately connected with the Master for such a long time.

26. How much the Master looked to Mathur's welfare

Ah, how sweet was the relation existing between Mathur and the Master! If the Master required anything, he immediately asked Mathur for it at the time of his Sadhana and even afterwards. About the visions or the spiritual moods that were experienced by him at the time of ecstasy or at other times he used to ask Mathur, "Will you please tell me why such a thing happened?

Please say what you think of that", and so on. The Master kept an eye on Mathur's welfare, so that his money might be properly utilized; so that his money meant for the service of the Deity might be spent for that purpose and there by guests, poor people, holy men and others might be maintained and great merit, conducive to his good, might accrue to him. We have heard similar things even at the time when we were living with the Master long after the virtuous Rani Rasmani and Mathur had passed away; we got indications of that attitude of the Master from time to time. It will not be out of place here to give one example:

27. An example: The Master anxiously asked for and had the Prasada on the occasion of the worship of Phalaharini

From the time of Mathur it had been arranged that daily after the food offering and other services in the temples of Kali and Radha-Govinda had come to an end, a big plateful of boiled rice and other preparations and another plateful of fruits, sweets, etc., should be sent to the Master's room, so that the Master himself and others with him might partake of that consecrated food. Besides that, a part of the especial food that was offered on especial occasions to Mother Kali and Radha-Govinda used to be sent to the Master.

It was the rainy season — the day of the worship of Phalaharini. It was customary to celebrate the occasion on a small scale in the temple every year. There used to be a special worship of Kalika, the Mother of the universe, and various kinds of fruits and roots were offered to her. On this occasion also the same celebration was gone through. Flutes and other musical instruments were being played in the Nahabat. Swami Yogananda and some other devotees were there with the Master that day.

28. On especial ceremonial occasions the Master used naturally to have especial Bhavasamadhis

Particular characteristics of particular deities used to be manifested in the Master's body and mind on particular ceremonial occasions. On Vaishnava occasions the characteristics of Vishnu and on Sakta days those of Sakti

would be manifest. For example, on the Occasion of the worship of Sri Durga, especially at the time of the "juncture worship" or during the worship of the Mother Kali, the Master used to feel identified with the Mother of the universe, so much so, that he used to be motionless and sometimes his hands would assume the gestures, like those of Kali, offering a boon and protection against all fears. Similarly, on ceremonial occasions like Janmashtami, the eight Sattvika Vaishnava signs like trembling, horripilation, etc., were seen in him, so absorbed in the thoughts of Radha and Krishna would he be on those days. Again those spiritual moods used to come on him naturally, without any effort whatever. It was seen that just when on those occasions he became quite engrossed in diverse conversations with us and completely forgot that they were days of the special manifestations of God, his mind would suddenly withdraw from external matters and get identified completely with those aspects of the deity, as if some external power forcibly made him do it. At Shyampukur in Calcutta, we have seen many similar instances. Once, engrossed in conversation with a large number of men including Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar, the Master suddenly entered into such an ecstasy at the time of the "juncture worship" of Sri Durga. Having then seen his luminous face beaming with that splendour of smile who would say that he had any illness or he was the same person with the pale face, indicative of the suffering from illness, seen a moment ago?

There was a similar manifestation of a mood in the Master's body and mind that day—the day of the worship of Phalaharini. Sometimes filled with bliss, he, like a boy of five, danced, and sang Mother's name. All were charmed, gazing at the unprecedented beauty of his face. They were, moreover, experiencing in their hearts, various wonderful divine emotions by virtue of the company of the god-man. The night came almost to an end when Mother's worship was finished. So nobody could take any rest. It was dawn.

The next morning, at about eight or nine, the Master saw that the fruits etc., offered to the deities that were to reach his room had not yet arrived. He called his nephew Ramlal, the priest of the Kali temple, and asked him the reason; but he could not say anything. "All the offered articles", said he, "have, as usual, been sent to the chief officer at his office. They are being

distributed from there and every one is getting the share he is entitled to, according to the established custom; but I cannot say why it has not reached here even now." The Master was uneasy, nay, troubled, about it. He asked many persons one after another, "Why has Prasada not yet come from the office?" and went on talking about it. He waited a little but when he found that it had not reached him even then, he put on his slippers and himself went to the chief officer. He asked the officer, " Hallo, how is it that the Prasada due to that room (showing his room) has not yet been sent as usual? Has there been a mistake? It is wrong that such a long standing arrangement should be upset through a mistake." The officer looked small and said, "Has it not yet reached there? It is very wrong! I am just now sending it."

29. What Swami Yogananda thought when he saw the Master thus demanding and receiving Prasada

Swami Yogananda was then a boy. He was of course a little proud as he was born in the ancient and respectable family of Savarna Chaudhuris. The chief official, other officers, priests and others of the temple did not count at all in his estimation. But he had completely surrendered himself at the holy feet of the Master on account of the latter's disinterested grace and love; and his home being adjacent to Rasmani's garden, it was convenient for him to visit the Master daily. And how could he refrain from visiting? For, the strange attraction of the Master took him by force, as it were, to him at the fixed time every day. But was it possible for him to be familiar with the people of the temple only because he had respect for the Master? So, when he found that the Master was anxious to know the reason why the fruits, roots and the like offered to the deities had not been sent, he blurted out, "What does it matter if they don't come? Ah, how precious the articles are! These things again never suit your stomach; you take nothing of these; under such circumstances is there any harm if they are not sent at all?" But the Master had not at all given ear to what he said and had gone in a short time to ask the chief officer for the reason. Yogin then thought, "How strange! why is he so anxious today about those trifling fruits, roots and sweets? Why is he in this state of mind today, whom I never saw agitated under any circumstances?" When after a good deal of reflection he could

not find out any special reason whatever for it, he came at last to the conclusion, “Oh, I see it now; it is the family tradition that tells, whether he be the divine Lord Himself or any other great personality. He is born in the family of priests accustomed generation after generation to ‘bundle rice and plantain’. Will not a little at least of the tradition of that family cling to him? What can it be but that? He never feels uneasy about matters of great concern; but he has become so restless about this trifling matter. If that were not the fact, why is he so anxious for those things which he will not eat or otherwise use himself? It cannot but be the habit inherited from his ancestors.”

30. The Master gave the reason why he did so

Yogin, or as he was afterwards known, Swami Yogananda, had arrived finally at that conclusion when the Master returned and said to him, “Do you know why I did so? Rasmani has bequeathed so much property that holy men and devotees may get Prasada after the articles of food have been offered to the deity. It is the devotees, coming here to know God, who eat the articles offered to the deity. That answers the purpose of Rasmani’s gift. But do you think that what they (the priests of the temple) take away are utilized in the same way? They sell the rice for money; some of them again keep prostitutes; they take these fruits etc., and feed them. I fight so much only in order that a little at least of Rasmani’s intentions might be fulfilled.” Swami Yogananda was surprised to hear it and thought, “Oh, such is the hidden meaning even of this act of the Master!”

31. The wonderful relation between the Master and Mathur

Ah, what a sweet relation the Master thus established with Mathur! It is very clear that by virtue of the motiveless grace of the Master, Mathur’s love was so intensified that “father” became his very life. Besides that, it was his behaviour like that of a boy, which attracted Mathur in no small measure. Who is there, whose mind is not attracted towards a boy inexperienced in everything of the world? Is there any one who, being near him, does not keep an eye of concern on his sweet motiveless movements

and go forward to protect him lest he should be harmed in the excitement of play? And, again, there was not the slightest artificiality in the boy-like behaviour of the Master. When he was in that mood, he was felt to be a boy really incapable of protecting himself. Is it, therefore, strange that there naturally arose in the powerful, vigorous and intelligent Mathur an effort to protect him in all circumstances? Therefore, just as on the one hand, he depended on the Master's divine power, so, on the other hand, he always kept himself ready to protect "father" whom he knew to be like an inexperienced boy. When Mathur saw that there was thus a strange juxtaposition in "father" of the all-knowing nature of the spiritual teacher and the little-knowing nature of a boy, he perhaps came to some such conclusion as this, that he would have to protect "father" as regards all worldly matters including his personal safety, while "father" would protect him regarding subtle spiritual things lying beyond human vision and power. We, therefore, see clearly that Mathur's love for "father" assumed an unintelligible nature; the strange "father" was a wonderful meeting ground of a very complex aggregate of contrary, attributes such as Godhood and manhood, all-knowingness and little-knowingness. Although "father", established in Bhavamukha with his hands in the posture[1] symbolic of bestowing boons and protection from fear, was the chosen Ideal of Mathur, the latter had, however, sometimes to divert and console the very "father" in his childlike mood, who was then an embodiment of simplicity and dependence.

32. How Mathur consoled the Master by speaking of the "worm generating lust"

The love of Mathur for him endowed him with the power of providing plausible explanations for all the queries and doubts of "father". One day "father" went out suddenly when he was talking with Mathur and returned with a sad face. He then asked Mathur, "Will you Please tell me what this disease is? I saw a worm going out from my body with the urine. Nobody, I am sure, has such worms within his body. What is it that has happened to me?" The very "father" who perhaps, a little while ago, was charming everybody with wonderful explanations of the hidden spiritual truths was

now beside himself like a boy with causeless anxiety, depending wholly on Mathur's intelligence and words of assurance. No sooner had Mathur heard this than he said, "It is very good, 'father', that it has happened so. Every one has a worm that generates lust in his body. It is this lust-worm that produces various bad thoughts in him and makes him commit evil actions. That lust-worm has left your body by the grace of the Mother. Why are you so uneasy about it?" As soon as "father" heard it he was consoled and said, "Ah! You are right; how lucky it was that I asked you!" Saying so, he expressed his joy like a boy.

33. The Master spoke to Mathur on the coming of his inner-circle devotees

"You see," said "father" one day in the course of conversation to Mathur, "Mother has shown and convinced me that there are many devotees of mine who are to form an inner circle. They will all come and hear and know of God from 'here' and will have direct knowledge of Him, realize Him, and be blessed with divine love and devotion. Mother will sport in various ways with this case and will do good to many; this is why She has not broken it and has kept it even now. What do you say? Are all these mere hallucinations of the brain or real and true perceptions? Please tell me that,"

"Why, father," said Mathur, "should they be hallucinations? When Mother has not shown you anything deceptive up to this time, why should this only be wrong? This also will prove to be true. But why is mere this delay in their coming? Let them by all means come soon; let us be happy with them."

"Father" was also convinced that the divine Mother had shown him true things. He then said, "I don't know when they will come; Mother has said so. She has shown me that. Whatever is to happen by Mother's will, will happen."

34. An example of the Master's boy-like nature: the incident of plucking the green Susni

Rani Rasmani had no son, but had four daughters. Mathur Babu married the third and after her death, the youngest daughter. The intelligent Rani fixed and marked in her life-time the share of the estate for each of the sons- in-law, lest there should arise a dispute among them over the estate. One day after the estate had been thus divided, Mathur Babu's wife, or as she was known in the family, the "third mistress" went to bathe in a pond in another's share of the estate, saw a luxuriant growth of the green Susni there, plucked some and brought it away with her. It was the Master only who saw her do it. As soon as he saw her doing that he was extremely worried. "The 'third mistress'," thought the Master, "has taken another's property without asking her for it; it is immoral; she did not think it an act of theft to take another's property without her knowledge. And, again, why should she covet another's property?" He was thinking thus when he met that daughter of the Rani to whose share the said pond had fallen. The Master narrated to her immediately the whole incident. She could not control her laughter at hearing it and seeing that serious mood of the Master as if the "third mistress" had acted very wrongly, she said humorously, "Ah, the 'third mistress' acted very wrongly, 'father'." Just at that time the "third mistress" also happened to come there. She also said jokingly when she knew the reason of her sister's laugh, "Father, is it proper for you to expose me? I stole the green and secretly took it away lest she should see it; you have thus put me out of countenance!" Saying so the two sisters raised a roar of laughter. The Master then said, "I don't know your worldly ways. But when the property has been divided, it is not good to take anything without the knowledge of the owner. This is why I told her all this so that she might know it and settle matters as she liked." The daughters of the Rani began to laugh all the more at his words, and thought how frank and naive "father" was.

35. Mathur took refuge in the Master in times of worldly dangers: an example

On the one hand, "father" had such a childlike nature depending on Mathur; on the other hand, when there was a fight with cudgels between two parties and there was a murder committed at the orders of Mathur

during a quarrel with another landlord and Mathur was in great danger, and came and said importunately, “Save me ‘father’,” — “Father” grew angry at first and scolded Mathur much. “You wretch,” said he, “you will create an affray every day and come and say, ‘save me’; what can I do, you wretch? Go and suffer the consequences. What do I know?” Then on account of his importunities he said, “Well, whatever is to happen by Mother’s will, will happen.”[1] And as a matter of fact that danger passed away.

36. An example of the miserly Mathur’s ungrudging expenditure of money

Many are the examples that can be given of both kinds of characteristics of the Master. Having had these experiences, Mathur was firmly convinced that by the grace of the multiform “father” it was that he possessed whatever he had, namely, wealth, respect, power and everything. Therefore there is nothing to be surprised at in the royal honour that Mathur paid to the Master, as an incarnation of God, and unflinching devotion to and steadfast faith in him. The extent of worldly men’s devotion is gauged by the amount of money they spend for the objects of their devotion. Besides, Mathur was a little miserly, as clever, calculating and intelligent worldly people generally are. But it is very clear that Mathur’s faith and devotion were indeed sincere when we see how unstintedly he spent money on “father”. Mathur once dressed him in beautiful attire and seated him to witness a Yatra performance placing before him full one hundred rupees or more in stacks of ten rupees each for him to give as rewards to the singers and actors. “Father” went on listening to the Yatra and when he experienced deep spiritual emotions or was charmed with some captivating songs or speech of an actor he immediately pushed the entire sum of money with his hand towards the person concerned and rewarded him with that. Mathur was not at all annoyed at it. He expressed his joy saying, “A reward just befitting the high mind of ‘father’.” He placed stacks of coins over again in similar rows before him. How long could that money last with “father”, who had become established in Bhavamukha and had always been absolutely free from covetousness owing to his conviction, “money is earth, earth is money”? Beside himself with the overwhelming inebriation of the

divine emotions, he would give away once more the whole amount at once. Afterwards finding no money near him he took off the shawl from his person and the highly precious cloth put on by him and gave them away and remained motionless in Samadhi in the garment of divine consciousness[1] only! Mathur, filled with bliss, thought that his money had been put to its proper use and began to fan him.

37. Other illustrations

Many are the examples of the liberality of the miserly Mathur in connection with the Master. He took the Master with him when he made his pilgrimage to Kasi, Vrindavan and other holy places. At Kasi he obeyed his words and like a wish-fulfilling tree made free gifts; he gave to everyone whatever necessary articles were asked for. He requested the Master to ask for something at that time but the latter could find nothing of which he was in need. He said, “Give me a water-pot (Kamandalu).” Mathur’s eyes were wet with tears to see his spirit of detachment.

38. Mathur served the poor at Vaidyanath at the wish of the Master

The Master’s heart was filled with compassion to see the poverty and misery of the village people when going through a village near Vaidyanath at the time of his pilgrimage to Kasi, Vrindavan and other holy places with Mathur. “You are”, said he to Mathur, “but a manager of Mother’s estate. Give these people sufficient oil to cool their heads and a piece of cloth to each and feed them to their fill once.” At first Mathur was a little hesitant and said, “Father, the pilgrimage will require much money and they are, I find, many; I may later be in want of money if I begin to do all that. What do you advise under these circumstances?” But who gave ear to it? There was an incessant flow of tears from the Master’s eyes to see the misery of the villagers and his heart was filled with an unprecedented compassion. “You wretch, I will not go to your Kasi. I will remain here with them; they have none to call their own; I will not leave them behind and go.” Saying so, he became obstinate like a boy and went and sat down amongst the poor people. Seeing such compassion in the Master, Mathur had cloth brought

from Calcutta and did as “father” asked him to do. Beside himself with joy to see the villagers happy, “father” also bade good-bye to them and started gladly with Mathur on his journey to Kasi. We are told that the Master went on another occasion with Mathur to a certain village in his estate near Ranaghat where he was seized with a similar compassion to see the miserable plight of the villagers and he made Mathur do likewise once again.

39. The relation of the Master with Mathur was determined by Providence: The Master spoke of Mathur’s next birth, as he had a desire for enjoyment

Identified with the divine Consciousness and Power as the spiritual teacher, the Master bound Mathur to himself for ever in a sweet relationship. Such unprecedented relation with Mathuranath was the mature result of the Master’s prayer to the divine Mother at one time during his Sadhana under the influence of a sudden strange mood. He had prayed, “Mother, do not make me an austere Sadhu; keep me enjoying (the necessities of life). For, as the result of that prayer, the divine Mother showed him four persons (the suppliers of provisions) who had been sent with him into the world for the maintenance of his body by providing for the necessities of his life, and Mathuranath was the first and the foremost of them. Could this relation remain unimpaired for so long a time if it had not been determined by Providence? Alas! O world, how many such pure and sweet relations have you seen so far? And alas! O desire for enjoyment, with what an adamantine chain have you bound man! Although we have seen and established our relationship with such a wonderful Master — of a pure, awakened and free nature, a veritable image of selfless love — our minds even now cast a longing lingering look at lower objects. While one day a friend was listening attentively and with amazement to the story of Mathuranath from the Master himself, thinking of Mathur’s great good fortune, the friend asked him, “What has happened to him, sir, after death? It is certain, he will not have to be born again!” Questioned so, the Master answered, “He must have taken birth as a king somewhere; for, he had the desire of enjoyment.” Saying so he immediately started another topic.

Footnote

1. The house of the Master was so called because of their family surname, Chattopadhyaya or Chattarya or colloquially Chatterji or Chatujye.—Tr.

1. The Master referred to the body by this expression.—Tr.

1. A pot, full of water, is kept in front of the image and a looking glass is held over it in such a way as to catch the reflection of the image, when it is immersed in the water. This is what is known as the “looking-glass immersion” of the Mother.—Tr.

1. Matthew XXIV—11. 23-26.

1. *Kaivalya Upanishad*—1. 2; *Narayana Upanishad*—11. 3.

2. *Viveka-chudamani*, 79.

1. About two ounces.

2. The Vaishnava literature has called that ecstatic mood of spiritual love “the Madhurabhava”, which was seen in Radharani at Vrindavan in its fully developed stage with all the nineteen modifications, classified into eight groups and named as the “eight Sattvika modifications”— *e.g.,* laughing, weeping, tears, tremor, horripilation, sweating, fainting, etc. The culmination of this Madhurabhava is known as the Mahabhava or the “great mood”. It is in this stage that all the nineteen physical modifications mentioned above, are manifest fully—all owing to a superabundance of love for the Lord. It is said that ordinary mortals, even when perfected, cannot reach that dizzy height—it is possible for the divine incarnations only.

1. *Viveka-chudamani,* 542.

1. As he was then feeling himself identified with the Kali form of the divine Mother.—Tr.

1. i.e., stark naked, from the ordinary plane of consciousness.—Tr.

1. This is an expression of his assent to a request.—Tr.

CHAPTER VIII
THE RELATION OF THE MASTER AS THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER WITH HIS OWN TEACHERS

> I reside in the hearts of all. From Me come memory and knowledge and also their loss. It is I alone who am demonstrated by all the Vedas. I am the founder of the institutions for the handing down of the meaning of the Vedanta and am the knower of the Vedas.
>
> —Gita. XV. 15

1. The power of being a spiritual teacher is the especial possession of the incarnations of God

We have already[1] said that the indication of the power of being a spiritual teacher is found from childhood in those who are born to be such teachers. The case of the race of great souls known as the incarnations of God needs no mention. Any one of them who is born to establish a particular faith or doctrine in society is seen, as it were, established in that faith or doctrine from childhood. It is true that the development of their bodies, senses, etc., and the favourable conditions of time, place, etc., may gradually appear and help that doctrine to be fully developed in them, but it is not a fact that it is these causes that produce this doctrine in them in this life. It is as if it is born with them and they start their lives with this power. The cause of the birth of this power in their present life has not been traced in spite of a thousand efforts. It is found to be exactly so when one makes an inquiry regarding the birth of the power of spiritual teaching in the life of the Master also. One is surprised to discover the manifestation more or less of

this power during his childhood, youth, the time of his Sadhana and all other periods of his life. And however much one may ponder over it, one can by no means ascertain how this power first originated in his life. We have no desire to increase the volume of our book by mentioning here the events of his childhood. But it will not be out of place here to make a present to the reader of the events that yet remain to be described concerning the Master's youth and the time of his Sadhana, during which time various kinds of divine sports were manifested through him as the spiritual teacher with Mathur Babu.

2. The Master was initiated by several teachers

The Master tried on many occasions to explain to us, by adverting to the story of the world-renouncing Avadhuta spoken of in the *Bhagavata,* that though there should be one teacher only to initiate one in the Mantra of one's chosen Ideal, there may be more than one subsidiary teacher or, in other words, instructor, teaching religious matters in general. It is written in the *Bhagavata* that, being taught particular spiritual matters by twenty-four subsidiary teachers, one after another, the said Avadhuta attained success. In the Master's life too we do not find any lack of instructors for acquainting him with particular modes of spiritual practice for realizing particular truths. We have heard him on many occasions make a special mention of the names only of the Bhairavi Brahmani, the "naked" Tota Puri and the Muslim Govinda. The Master mentioned but rarely the names of other teachers, though he learnt from them the methods of spiritual practice according to other Hindu denominations. The only thing he mentioned was that he learnt from other teachers the processes of spiritual practice according to other sects and attained perfection in their discipline in three days only. He abstained from mentioning their names. But it is difficult to say now whether he forgot their names or they were not worth mentioning. But it is clear that he had contact with them for a very short time only. This is why they do not deserve special mention.

3. The Bhairavi Brahmani

The Bhairavi Brahmani, of all his subsidiary teachers, stayed with the Master the longest, but it is hard to tell how long. For, before we took refuge at the holy feet of the Master, she had left Dakshineswar for good. The Master afterwards met her at Kasi where she was practising austerities.

4. The Brahmani assisted the Master in Sadhana

We have heard from the Master that the Bhairavi Brahmani lived for a very long time at the Dakshineswar temple and other places like Devamandal-ghat on the bank of the Ganga in the neighbourhood. We are told that she made the Master practise one after another the disciplines recorded in the sixty-four principal Tantras. We were also told that the Brahmani was well versed in the Vaishnava scriptures also, and helped the Master in certain matters at the time when he practised Sakhibhava and other devotional moods. We are further told that, greatly honoured, she lived at Dakshineswar for about twelve years, even when his Sadhana period had long been over and her help had become unnecessary. She went with the Master and Hriday for sometime during that period even to Kamarpukur, and lived there among the Master's relatives. From that time on, the Holy Mother respected her like her own mother-in-law and called her "mother".

5. The Brahmani's experience in the devotional moods recorded in the Vaishnava scriptures

The Brahmani followed the Sadhana according to the Vaishnavas and experienced a little of the bliss arising from the loving attitudes towards God such as Sakhya, Vatsalya, etc. Overwhelmed with Vatsalya towards the Masters, with butter in hand and with her clothes wet with tears, she used to cry out loudly "Gopala", "Gopala", while she was staying at Devamandalghat in Ariadaha; and simultaneously the Master's mind at Dakshineswar felt a sudden yearning to see the Brahmani. We are told that he covered that distance of two miles at a run, went to her like a child running to its mother, sat down near her and ate that butter! Besides, in red Varanasi silk cloth and ornaments collected by her from somewhere, with

various kinds of eatables and enjoyable things in her hand and singing songs she sometimes used to come with the ladies of the neighbourhood to the Master at Dakshineswar, feed him and then return. The Master said that she, with her dishevelled hair, and her agitated mood due to spiritual emotions, was taken to be none other than Yasoda herself, the queen of Nanda, grieving on account of the separation from Gopala.

6. Mathur was suspicious on seeing her beauty and accomplishments

The Brahmani possessed unusual beauty and accomplishments. We have heard from the Master that Mathur Babu had some doubts about her character, became suspicious when he saw her grace and beauty and heard of her unrestricted travelling everywhere alone, without a companion. One day, it is said, he went the length of speaking out in derision, "Where is your Bhairava, O Bhairavi?"[1] The Brahmani was then coming out of the temple of Kali after paying her obeisance to the Deity. Although suddenly questioned thus, she did not feel at all embarrassed or angry, but calmly looked at Mathur and afterwards pointed her finger at the great God lying as a dead body under the feet of the Mother and showed Him to Mathur. The suspicious worldly Mathur was also not a man to let the matter drop easily and said, "But that Bhairava does not move." "Why", repeated the Brahmani, in a calm, and serious voice "have I become a Bhairavi, if I cannot make the immovable move?" Ashamed and perplexed, Mathur stood speechless at the serious mood and answer of the Brahmani. Later on his mind became free from that vicious suspicion as he began to be acquainted daily with her noble nature and innumerable good qualities.

7. The Brahmani's antecedents

We have known from the Master that the Brahmani was born somewhere in eastern Bengal and everyone who saw her was impressed with the idea that she was undoubtedly a lady of a very respectable family. She was indeed such. But we never heard from the Master as to whose house she had illumined as a daughter and in what village she was born; nor do we know whether she ever shed lustre on any one's house as a wife or the reason why

she felt detachment from the world and travelled from place to place as a Sannyasini in her advanced age. And none of us knows in the least where she acquired so much learning nor where or when she made so much progress in Sadhana.

8. The Brahmani, a spiritual aspirant of a high order

It needs no mention that the Brahmani was far advanced in Sadhana. This is very evident from the fact that she was selected by Providence to be a spiritual teacher of the Master. We heard from the Master himself that even before she came to him she could know by the power of Yoga that in her lifetime she would have to help three men, the Master and two others, in their Sadhana and that as soon as she saw them in different places at different times she recognized them and did help them. This leaves no doubt in our minds that she was an aspirant of a high order.

9. The Brahmani's Yogic vision

She spoke of Chandra and Girija to the Master at her very first meeting with him. "My child," she said, "I have already met both of them. And today I meet you whom I have been seeking all the time. I shall afterwards introduce them to you." And as a matter of fact the Brahmani brought them afterwards to Dakshineswar and introduced them to him. We were told by the Master himself that they were both aspirants of a high order. But though they were far advanced on the path of Sadhana, their desire of realizing God remained unfulfilled. They attained some especial powers of working miracles and were going to lose their way in that wood.

10. The story of Chandra, a disciple of the Brahmani

The Master told us that Chandra was of a contemplative nature and a lover of God. He attained success in working a miracle with a Gutika or tiny ball; with the ball, sanctified by a Mantra on his person, he could be beyond the vision of ordinary eyes and could easily have ingress into and egress from even carefully protected, unapproachable places. But the weak

human mind becomes egoistic if it acquires such miraculous powers before the realization of God. And it is needless to say that it is the increase of egoism that entangles man in the net of desires, prevents him from going forward towards higher ideals and at last becomes the cause of his fall. Ah, how many and various are the ways in which the Master explained to us over and over again: “It is the increase of egoism that leads to the increase of sin and its decrease conduces to the attainment of virtue. The increase of egoism is accompanied with the decrease of virtue and the destruction of egoism results in the realization of God. Selfishness is sin and selflessness is virtue. When the ‘I’ dies, all troubles are over”. “Ah!” continued he, “it is egoism only that is called in the scriptures, ‘the knot of spirit and matter’. Spirit or consciousness means the Self which is of the nature of pure knowledge and matter means the body, senses, etc. This egoism has tied these two together and has created in the human mind the firm delusion, ‘I am a Jiva possessed of the body, senses, etc.’ One cannot make any progress if one cannot cut this difficult knot asunder. It has to be given up. Again, Mother has shown me that miraculous powers are to be shunned like faeces. Attention should not be paid to them. They sometimes come spontaneously to one when one applies oneself to spiritual practices; but one who pays attention to them has to stop short there and cannot go forward towards God.”

11. The attainment of the powers of miracles makes one fall from Yoga

With Swami Vivekananda, meditation was, as it were, his life. He kept at all times his mind meditating on God, even while he was eating, lying, sitting and doing other necessary physical acts. The Master used to say that he had “attained perfection in meditation”. While he was meditating one day, there suddenly came on him clairvoyance and clair-audience i.e., the power of seeing and hearing from a distance. As soon as he sat down to meditate and the meditation became just a little deep, his mind ascended to a plane from where he could see persons and hear their talks. No sooner had he seen anything like that than there arose a desire in his mind to go and see whether the vision was true or not. And he gave up his meditation immediately, went to those places and found that whatever he had seen

during his meditation was entirely true. When he told the Master about it a few days after the occurrence, the latter said, “All these are obstacles on the path to the realization of God. Don’t meditate for a few days now.”

12. Chandra met with his fall on attaining the power of performing the miracle

Egoism grew in Chandra when he attained success in the Mantra. We were told by the Master that the attachment to lust and gold grew gradually in Chandra’s mind. He became enamoured of the daughter of a respectable well-to-do man and began to frequent his house by means of that miraculous power. Thus on account of the increase in his egoism and selfishness, Chandra lost the power and met with various kinds of humiliation.

13. The story of Girija, another disciple of the Brahmani

The Master told us also of the strange power of Girija. He said that he went one day with him for a walk to the garden of Sambhu Mallick in the neighbourhood of the Kali temple. Sambhu Mallick loved the Master very much and considered himself blessed if he could be of any service to him. He fixed up a piece of land near the Kali temple at a rent of rupees two hundred and fifty and built on it a room for the Holy Mother to live in. In those days she used to live in that room when she came to have a bath in the Ganga and visit the Master. Once, while she was staying there, she had an attack of severe blood dysentery. Sambhu Babu then made all arrangements for her treatment, diet, etc. His wife was also a devotee, who worshipped the Master and the Holy Mother as God incarnate. She took the Holy Mother home on “auspicious”[1] Tuesdays and worshipped her as the divine Mother of the universe. Moreover, Sambhu Babu provided whatever was necessary for the Master, such as food and carriage hire for going to and from Calcutta. It was of course after the passing away of Mathur Babu that he got the privilege of serving the master that way. The Master described him as his second “supplier of provisions”, and in those days he used very

often to go to his garden for a walk, spend a few hours in religious conversation with him and then return.

14. Girija's power of performing a miracle

On one occasion he went with Girija for a walk to Sambhu Babu's garden and a long time passed in conversation with him. "Devotees", said the Master, "possess a nature like that of hemp-smokers. A hemp-smoker first has a strong pull at the bowl, hands it over to another and then puffs out the smoke slowly. He does not enjoy the intoxication till he passes the bowl to another. Similarly when devotees come together, one devotee, absorbed in the divine mood, speaks on God and filled with bliss becomes silent; he then gives another devotee an opportunity to speak on Him and enjoys the bliss as a listener." As Sambhu Babu, Girija and the Master came together that day none of them was conscious how time flew. It was gradually dusk, and the first quarter of the night passed away imperceptibly, when the Master realised that they had to return. He bade good night to Sambhu, and came to the road with Girija and began to proceed towards the Kali temple. But it was pitch dark. Unable to see anything of the road, he was slipping at every step and mistaking the direction. That it was dark did not occur to the Master and, being deeply absorbed in divine talks, he forgot to ask Sambhu for a lantern. What was he to do now? He caught hold of Girija's hand and began somehow to feel his way. But he was experiencing great difficulty. Seeing him suffering thus, Girija said, "Wait a little, brother; I will show you light." Saying so he turned about, stood and illumined the road with a long stream of effulgent light emanating from his back. The Master said, "The whole of the road up to the gate of the Kali temple was very clearly seen in that bright light and I had light all the way I came."

15. Chandra's and Girija's powers of performing miracles were destroyed by the Master as the spiritual teacher

The Master then smiled and immediately added, "But those powers of theirs did not continue long. They disappeared when Chandra and Girija lived for some time in this (my) company." Asked by us for the reason, the

Master said, “Mother withdrew their powers into this (his own body) for their good. And when that happened, they gave up all those vain things and their minds went towards God.”

16. Miraculous powers are obstacles on the path to the realization of God. The parable of crossing a river on foot

Saying so, he continued, “What is there in these powers? Entangled in them the mind travels far away from Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. Listen to a story: A man had two sons. Dispassion came on the elder in his youth. He left home as a monk, while the younger got his education and became learned and virtuous. He then married and applied his mind to the performance of the duties of a householder. Now, there is a tradition among monks that if they like, they may go to see the place of their birth once after the expiry of twelve years. The said monk also, came thus to see his birthplace. While surveying the land, the cultivation, the wealth and other possessions, of his younger brother he came to his gate, stood and called him by name. On hearing the call, the younger brother came out and saw his elder brother. As he met him after a long time, the younger brother was beside himself with joy. He saluted him, brought him in and sitting by his side, began to serve him in various ways. The two brothers conversed on various topics after taking their meal. The younger brother then asked the elder, ‘Brother, you gave up all these worldly pleasures and wandered as a monk for so long a time. Please tell me what you have gained by it.’ As soon as the elder brother heard this, he said, ‘Will you see it? Then come with me.’ Saying so he came with his younger brother to the bank of the river in the neighbourhood, and said, ‘Just see’, and immediately he walked on foot on the waters of the river to the other bank and called out to him, ‘Have you seen it?’ The younger brother paid half a penny to the ferry man, crossed the river by boat, went up to his brother and said, ‘What have I seen?’ The elder brother said, ‘Why? Have you not seen my crossing of the river on foot?’ The younger brother then laughed and said, ‘Brother, have you not also seen that I have crossed the river by paying a half-penny? But is this all you have got in return for putting up with so much suffering for twelve long years? You have got only what I accomplish so easily for just

half- a penny.' The elder brother was awakened by these words of the younger and applied his mind to the realization of God."

17. The increase of egoism due to the Miraculous powers: The Master's parable of an elephant, killed and brought back to life

Thus, through stories, the Master explained to us in many ways that the attainment of such small powers, compared with things in the spiritual world, was very trifling, quite unavailing and to be avoided by all means. We cannot abstain from narrating here another similar story of the Master: "A Yogi attained the power of bringing about whatever he mentioned. Whatever he said to anybody came to pass immediately. Even if he said to any body 'die', he died immediately: if he said to him again 'live', he came to life at once. One day on a journey that Yogi met a devout holy man. The Yogi found that he was always repeating the name of God and meditating on Him. He was told that the devotee had been practising such austerities there for many years. On seeing and after hearing all-these things the egoistic Yogi went up to that holy man and said condescendingly, 'Well, you have indeed been repeating the name of God for so long a time; tell me if you have gained anything?' The holy man replied humbly, 'What do I expect to get? I have no desire of getting anything except realizing Him; and one cannot realize Him without His grace. That is why I have been lying down here and calling on Him that He may some day have compassion on me knowing that I am so humble and lowly.' The Yogi retorted, 'If you have not gained anything, then what is the utility of this useless effort? Direct your effort so as to get something!' So advised, the devotee remained silent. But a little later he asked the Yogi, 'Well sir, may I hear what you yourself have got?' The Yogi said, 'Well, do you want to hear? Just see.' Saying so he said to an elephant tied under a tree close by, 'Elephant, die.' And the elephant dropped down dead at once. The Yogi said proudly, 'Do you see? See again.' With this he said to the dead elephant, 'Elephant, live.' And the elephant came back to life at once, shook the dust of his body off and stood there as before. The Yogi now said triumphantly, 'Well, have you now seen?' The devotee had kept silent so long; but now he said, 'Well what more have I observed than to see the elephant die and

come back to life again? But will you please tell me what you have gained thereby? Have you become free from repeated births and deaths by attaining that power? Have you got deliverance from old age and disease? Or have you realized the indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Itself?' The Yogi then remained speechless and was awakened."

Though Chandra[1] and Girija proceeded far on the path to the realization of God with the help of the Brahmani, they were far from being perfect. Having at once the inspiring contact with the Master and the power of performing those miracles, the latter, with its roots in egoism, was destroyed by the strength of the former. Thus they got an awakening and advanced with redoubled energy along the path leading to God-vision.

18. The Brahmani did not realize the unqualified non-dual state of consciousness; proof of it

We have convincing proof of the fact that, though the Bhairavi Brahmani herself had proceeded very far along the path of Sadhana, she had not had the full realization of the indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. The Master had attained perfection in the disciplines prescribed in the Tantras with the help of the Brahmani, when Tota Puri, who had realised the Nirvikalpa state of consciousness, the ultimate plane spoken of in the Vedanta, came for the first time, in the course of his travels, to the Kali temple at Dakshineswar. No sooner had Tota Puri seen the Master than he recognized him to be one of the fittest persons to enter the path of the Vedanta and taught him the sadhana leading to the Nirvikalpa Samadhi by initiating him in Sannyasa. The Brahmani then made great efforts to make him desist from proceeding along that path. "My child," said she, "don't visit him often; don't mix much with him. His path is dry and austere. All your ardent affection and intense love for God will vanish if you mix with him." It is evident from this that although the learned Brahmani was an extraordinary person in respect of devotion to the divine Lord, she never knew nor even dreamt that the unqualified state of Consciousness spoken of in the Vedanta, described and regarded by her as a dry and austere path, was the first step to the realization of the true, supreme devotion. She did not know that those persons alone who were pure, awakened and absolutely

content in the Self could have selfless and ardent affection and intense love for God and that "the two, pure devotion and pure knowledge, are one and the same" as the Master used to say. Our inference is that the Brahmani did not understand it; and, because she would not understand it, the Master concealed from her as well as from his mother the fact that he practised Nirvikalpa Samadhi by shaving his head, putting on ochre-dyed cloth and being initiated by Swami Tota Puri into the mystery of Sannyasa. We are told that the old mother of the Master used to live then on the first floor of the music room in the north of the Dakshineswar temple grounds and that the Master confined himself within a room at the time of practising the Vedanta and kept himself out of sight from all persons for three days. It was the revered Puri alone who used to go to him from time to time. It is needless to say that the Master did not even give ear to the Brahmani's words.

19. Definition of the "animal mode", "hero mode", and "divine mode" of the Tantras

So far as we have been told by the Master, it seems that the Brahmani was an expert in the heroic mode of worship of the Tantras. In the Tantras three modes of practice for the realization of God, namely, those of the animal, the hero and the divine are indicated. Those aspirants in whom the animal feelings of lust, anger, etc., prevail are aspirants of the animal mode of worship. They are enjoined to keep away from all objects of temptation, to keep a special eye on external purity and conduct, to engage themselves in the repetition of the Mother's name, Purascharana and the like. The love of God prevails over the animal feelings such as lust, anger, etc., in aspirants following the hero mode. The attractions of lust and gold and objects of sight, taste, etc., intensify the love of God in them. They, therefore, should try to devote their whole mind to the divine Mother, living in the midst of the temptation of lust and gold and other things, and remaining steady under their action and reaction. They alone can become aspirants of the divine mode of worship in whom lust, anger, etc., have for ever been washed away by the strong current of the love of the divine Mother and the practice of the good qualities[1] of forgiveness, rectitude of

conduct, kindness, contentment, truthfulness, etc., has become natural like inhaling and exhaling. These, in short, are the rough definitions of these three modes of worship. The best, mediocre and lowest aspirants spoken of in, the Vedanta are respectively those following the divine, heroic and animal modes described in the Tantras.

20. Brahmani the "heroic" aspirant, had not even qualified herself for the "divine mode" of worship

Although she was the foremost amongst the aspirants following the heroic mode, the Brahmani could not even develop the qualifications for following the divine mode. Having seen the living example of the Master and having got assistance from him, there arose in the Brahmani a strong desire for achieving the qualifications to follow the divine mode. The Brahmani saw, that as soon as he heard of Siddhi (hemp) or Karana[2], let alone taking either, he became intoxicated with the feeling of his oneness with God, the cause of the universe, that as soon as he saw a woman whether chaste or unchaste he was reminded of the bliss-giving and nourishing powers of the Mother of the universe, which produced in his mind the attitude of the child of the divine Mother and that at the touch of gold and other metals his hands and other limbs got contracted even during deep sleep. Who is there who has not the fire of divine love kindled in his heart while he is in the company of such a blazing fire as the Master? Who is there who can live in such company without acquiring an aversion for the ephemeral worldly wealth, power, etc., and without knowing that God is more than our own, the eternal relation of ours? This is why, we are told, that the Brahmani spent the rest of her life in practising intense austerities.

21. The proof of it

We have also heard from the Master that the Brahmani felt jealous if he mixed much with anyone else or paid great respect to any other aspirant or devotee of God. We can clearly understand that attitude of hers towards the Master was like the painful jealousy and distress felt by the grandmother or some other old woman-relative of a fond child brought up by her when, he

in later years, loves or takes care of some one else of the family. But it was not proper for an aspirant of so high an order as the Brahmani to have such a feeling in her heart, since she had had the opportunity of observing the Master day and night at all hours for so long a time in all actions, in all circumstances, and in all moods. She ought to have known that the love, respect, etc., of the Master were not momentary and fleeting like those of others. She ought to have known that the love and respect he reposed in her were reposed for ever and there was no ebb and flow in them. But alas, O worldly love, and O mind of woman, you always want to bind the object of your love for ever and make him your possession! You do not like to give him the slightest liberty. You think that as soon as the object of your love gets a little liberty, he will not be yours and is sure to love some one else more than you. You do not understand that it is the weakness of your mind that prompts you to think so. You do not understand that the love that does not allow freedom to the object of love and cannot or does not learn to forget itself and feel happy in what the object of love wants, very often evaporates in a short time. So, if you have reposed your heart-felt love in anybody, know for certain that the object of your love will remain yours only, and that that pure love, free from the slightest tinge of selfishness will, in the end, bring for the object of your love, as well as for you, even the direct vision of God and absolute freedom from all bondage.

22. The Brahmani became conscious of her spiritual want by the grace of the Master and went away to practise austerities

It is very surprising that although she was an aspirant of a high order, loving God intensely, the Brahmani did not understand this simple matter or was incapable of assimilating it, even if she had understood it. But there was indeed the lack of that conviction in her. Placed fortunately in the position of the spiritual teacher of Sri Ramakrishna she was developing slowly in her mind such ideas as, “I am superior to all; they should always obey me; otherwise they will meet with harm.” We are told that she did not even like the Master’s teaching the Holy Mother, which he used to do from time to time. We are also told that the Holy Mother used to be always hesitant and afraid of her and shrank within herself when she heard the

Brahmani speak like that. The Brahmani, however, came to realize at last by the grace of the Master that weakness of her mind. She realized that if under the circumstances she kept away from him she would be able to conquer her growing weakness, and that though the attraction of hers towards the Master was like the tie of a golden chain she had to break it and go forward along her chosen path. We understand very well that this was why the Brahmani at last left Dakshineswar and the holy company of the Master, and knowing that "an itinerant Sadhu and flowing water never become polluted",[1] she spent her time in travelling alone from one place of pilgrimage to another and practising austerities. It is needless to say that it was only through the Master's mood of the spiritual teacher that the Brahmani got this awakening.

23. The story of the revered Tota Puri

Tota Puri was a tall and stalwart figure. He was able to make his mind still and devoid of any functions whatever in Nirvikalpa Samadhi, as a result of mental abstraction and meditation for forty long years, living unattached and by himself. He, nevertheless, spent much time daily in practising meditation and Samadhi. The Master referred to him as the "naked one", as he used always to remain nude, like a boy. But he did so more probably because one should not always take the name of one's spiritual teacher or call him by name. The Master said that the "naked one" never lived in a house and always worshipped fire inasmuch as he belonged to the denomination of the Nagas. The holy men of the Naga denomination look upon fire as very sacred and that is why they collect wood and keep a fire lighted near them wherever they live. This fire is usually called Dhuni. Naga holy men offer Arati to the Dhuni every morning and evening and also offer all food obtained as Bhiksha, to the fire in the form of the Dhuni and then eat that offered food. That is why at Dakshineswar, the "naked one" had his seat under the Panchavati where he resided and kept a Dhuni lighted near him. His Dhuni burnt uniformly in rain or shine. It was near the Dhuni that the "naked one" took his food and rest. When, again, forgetting all worries and anxieties, the whole of the external world lay happily at the dead of night in the arms of the rest-giving sleep, like a child in its mother's

lap, the “naked one” would get up and make the Dhuni brighter. He would then sit down in his posture steady and firm like Mount Sumeru and merge his mind in Samadhi, restful like the motionless flame of a lamp in a windless place. In day-time also Sri Tota meditated most of the time; but he did it in a way that people could not know it. That is why he was very often seen to be lying at full length like a corpse with his body covered from head to foot with his wearing wrapper. The people thought he was sleeping.

24. The exchange of ideas between the Master and Tota Puri

The “naked one” kept near him a water-pot and a pair of long tongs only. He had a piece of skin to sit cross-legged on and always kept his body covered with a thick wrapper. He polished daily the water-pot and the tongs and kept them glittering. Seeing him practise meditation every day the Master one day asked him direct, “You have realized Brahman and become perfect; why do you then practise meditation daily?” At this he looked at the Master calmly and pointing with his finger to the water-pot, said, “Don’t you see how bright it looks? But what will happen if I don’t polish it daily? Will it not lose its lustre? Know that the mind also is like that. The mind also accumulates dirt if it be not polished daily by the practice of meditation.” Possessed of a keen insight, the Master accepted the opinion of his ‘naked’ teacher and said, “But if the water-pot be one of gold? It will then not surely become dirty even if it be not polished every day.” Tota smiled and assented, saying, “O yes, it is true indeed.” The Master remembered all his life the words of the “naked one” regarding the utility of the practice of daily meditation; he quoted him to us on many occasions. And it is our impression that the words of the Master viz., “a gold water-pot never becomes dirty”, were also imprinted for ever in Tota’s mind. He was convinced that the mind of the Master was indeed bright like a gold water-pot. It was from the very beginning that this kind of interchange of ideas between the teacher and the disciple used to take place.

25. The scriptures on the fearlessness and the freedom from bondage of the knowers of Brahman

26. The high state of Tota Puri

It is stated in the Vedantic scriptures, that man becomes completely free from fear immediately on the attainment of the knowledge of Brahman, and that it is the only way to be absolutely free from fear. Truly so, for, how can a person who has known that he himself is the Self, the indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Itself, ever pure, ever awakened, all-pervading and devoid of old age and death—how can such a person have in his mind the fear of any thing or person? Where and how can a person have fear who in truth sees and always feels in his heart of hearts that except the One there is no second thing or person in the world? He feels himself to be the indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Itself, at all times and in all circumstances whether eating or drinking, sitting or lying, sleeping or waking. He always feels his eternal and all-pervading existence everywhere and in every being. He feels that he does not eat or drink, walk or rest, or sleep, and is always awake; that he has no want or abundance, no idleness or activity, no grief or joy, no birth or death, no past or future—in fact he has nothing whatever which a man sees, hears, thinks, or imagines with the help of the five senses, the mind and the intellect. It is this experience that the scriptures have described as the last stage in the progress of discrimination, “not this, not this”, and of it have they said that the infinite Self abides beyond it and is directly realized there. To have this Self-knowledge always and every moment of one’s life is what is known as being established in the state of identification with the absolute pure Consciousness; and as soon as one is so established there arises the experience of freedom from all bondage whatever. The Master said: “When a Jiva realizes this state of being, completely one with that Consciousness, his body continues for twenty-one days only, when it falls off like a dry leaf or in other words gets destroyed, and as he never again has this ‘I’ consciousness, he does not return to this world any more. Again, the persons “liberated in life”, continue to have, at intervals, this direct realization of the Self and experiences, for short periods, of being one with pure Consciousness, when at last it culminates in the full, final realization of establishment in this state, which is the one eternal vision of the Self. The eternally free Isvarakotis, who are born in the world only to do good to many people by establishing some particular truth, go on, have this

experience, for short periods at intervals, of becoming one with that pure Consciousness from their childhood and, at last, when the work for which they are born is finished, merge completely and finally in that absolute Consciousness, becoming one with it. Again, those persons of extraordinary spiritual powers of whom the world has so far failed to ascertain whether they are human beings with exceptional powers or God Himself embodied and come down on earth to do good to humanity—those persons, the incarnations of God, can from their very childhood reach at will up to the perfect state of knowledge, stay there as long as they like and of their own accord come down again to do good to the people of this world, the meeting ground of birth and old age, grief and joy and the like. The revered Tota Puri attained the state of being "liberated in life" mentioned above as a result of austere spiritual practices of forty years, and this was why no action of his like eating, resting, sleeping, wandering, etc., was like that of the common run of human beings. Like the eternally free wind without any restraint, he used to roam about freely from place to place. Like the wind, again, he was untouched by the good or evil of the world, and like the very wind he could not remain confined in any place; for, we have heard from the Master that Tota would not stay more than three days in one place. On account of the Master's wonderful attraction, however, Tota lived continuously for eleven months at Dakshineswar. Ah, what a charming power the Master had!

27. The fearlessness of Tota Puri; he saw the Bhairava

The Master said many things to us about Tota's fearlessness. Amongst them there was a strange event concerning a spirit. On one occasion at the dead of night Tota made the Dhuni bright and was ready to sit for meditation. The world was calm, without the slightest noise. No sound reached the ear except the chirping of crickets and sometimes the deep hooting of the owls living in the holes of the pinnacles of the temples. There was also no stir in the wind. The branches of the trees of the Panchavati suddenly shook and a tall human form came down from the tree to the ground and looking steadfastly at Tota came with slow steps to the place of the Dhuni and sat down there. Surprised to see that personage, naked like

himself, Tota asked who he was. The person replied, “I am Bhairava (a demigod). I reside here upon the tree for the purpose of protecting this holy place.” Tota was not at all afraid and said, “Very well, you and I are the same being, you are one manifestation of Brahman, and I am another. Come, sit down and meditate.” The person laughed out and vanished, as it were, into the air. The “naked one” also was not at all perturbed by this event and applied his mind to meditation. The next morning Tota related the incident to the Master. The Master replied, “Yes, it is true, he lives here. I have also met him many times. He sometimes predicted certain future events to me. At one time the Company (Government of India) tried to acquire the whole plot of the Panchavati for the purpose of building a powder magazine. Hearing of the proposal I was much worried lest I should lose the opportunity of sitting and calling on Mother in this place away from the noise and turmoil of the world. Mathur instituted a big case against the Company on behalf of Rani Rasmani so that they might not acquire the piece of land. At that time, one day I saw the Bhairava sitting on the tree. He said to me, by a sign, that the Company would not be able to acquire the land; they would be defeated in the case. It actually came to pass.”

28. The story of Tota Puri’s teacher

We have not heard anything from the Master about the exact place of Sri Tota’s birth in the north-west part of the country. The Master also perhaps did not think it necessary to ask him about it. Especially, when questioned about their stage previous to Sannyasa, their names, birthplaces, etc., monks do not mention them. They say, “To put these questions to monks and for monks to answer them are both forbidden by the scriptures.” This is why, perhaps, the Master never asked the “naked one” that question. But, while travelling in the northwestern part of India after the Master had passed away, the Master’s Sannyasin-disciples of the monastery at Belur, asked old Paramahamsas and came to know that the said Puri was born at some place in or near the Punjab. The monastery of his spiritual teacher was at Ludhiana, a place near Kurukshetra. His teacher also was a famous Yogi and a monastery was established there. It is not clearly known whether that monastery was founded by him or any one of his predecessors. But the old

monks told the disciples of the Master that Tota Puri's teacher was the Mohanta, the head of that monastery and that even then there used to be held an annual fair there, where the people of neighbouring villages assembled in his honour. As he used to smoke tobacco, the villagers even now bring tobacco during the fair and make a present of it to his "community". It was Tota Puri who was installed Mohanta of that Math after the passing away of his teacher.

29. What Tota Puri said about his teacher's monastery and community

It seems from the words of Tota Puri himself that he was taught the Vedanta even in his boyhood by his own teacher, the head of the community of monks. He lived with him for a long time and became acquainted with the mystery of the study of the Vedas and spiritual practices. He told the Master that there lived in their community seven hundred monks and they daily practised, according to their teacher's instruction, meditation and other spiritual exercises in order to realize in their lives the truths that are hidden in the Vedanta. Tota Puri gave the Master some indication of the very good method of teaching meditation and other spiritual exercises in that community. The Master told us this story on many occasions for our instruction. He said, "The 'naked one' used to say that there were seven hundred naked spiritual aspirants in their community. Those who were beginning to learn meditation were asked to do so on cushions; for, they might feel an ache in their legs if they were to sit and meditate on hard seats and their unaccustomed minds might come to think of their bodies instead of God. Then afterwards, the deeper their meditation became the harder were the seats on which they had to sit. And at last they had to sit on a piece of skin only or on the bare ground to practise meditation. They were also made to observe strict rules regarding everything, viz., eating, drinking, etc. As regards their dress, the disciples were also made to practise gradually how to remain naked. As man is bound by the eight fetters of shame, hatred, fear, egoism regarding one's birth, lineage, custom, pretentiousness and so on, they were taught to give them up one by one. Afterwards when they developed deep concentration of mind they had to go and travel from one place of pilgrimage to another, at first with other monks and later alone and

then return. The naked monks had such rules." The Master was told by Sri Puri of the practice of electing their President (Mohanta). The Master said to us one day in the course of conversation: "That one only who was found amongst the naked monks to have attained the true state of Paramahamsa was elected by all to the seat of the Mohanta of the community when it fell vacant. How could, otherwise, the elected person remain true to his vows when he would have in his possession money, respect and power? He would then surely have his head turned. This is why they placed that person alone on the Mohanta's seat from whose mind the attraction for gold was found to have really vanished and gave him the charge of money and other valuable property. For, it was such a person alone that could rightly spend that wealth in the service of God and holy men."

30. The antecedents of Tota Puri

From these words it becomes very clear that Tota Puri was from his childhood brought up under the affectionate care of his teacher as if in a heavenly realm, far from worldly attachment, delusion, jealousy, hatred and the like. There is a custom in the north-western parts of this country that a couple who do not have a child at the proper time promise at a holy place that they will make a Sannyasin of the child, the first fruit of their love, and offer it to the service of God, and they actually carry out that promise in action also. Was the revered Puri offered to his teacher that way? It is inferred to be so, as he never mentioned anything about his parents, brothers, sisters and others of his pre-monastic life.

31. Tota Puri's mind

As a result of the impressions arising out of virtuous actions done in the past, the mind of the saint had simple, sincere faith, The Acharya Sankara has written in the very beginning of his *Viveka-chudamani*[1] that the attainment of all the three things together, namely, a human birth, a yearning for the realization of God and the refuge in a teacher, a knower of Brahman, is very rare in the world. It is not possible to attain them without the grace of the divine Lord. Not only did the saintly Puri fortunately get all

those three together, but he had the opportunity of using them as they should be used, and achieved liberation, the ultimate aim of human life. His mind assimilated his teacher's instruction and used always to carry it out in practice exactly according to his teaching. He does not seem to have suffered much from the deception and hypocrisy of the mind. There is a saying amongst the Vaishnavas, "The three, namely, the spiritual teacher, the chosen Ideal and the devotees are kind indeed; but not having the kindness of one, man has been sent to rack and ruin." Here "one" means one's own mind. As the mind is not kind, man is ruined. We do not think that the saint Puri had to suffer at the hands of such a "rascal" mind. His simple mind reposed its trust in God sincerely and was going forward slowly along the path pointed out by his teacher to be trod by him. While it was going forward it never cast behind a single covetous glance, prompted by an ungratified wish, towards the sins and temptations of the world. That was why the saint came to the conviction that his individual effort, perseverance, self-reliance and self-confidence were all in all. Ah, the saint did not know that when the mind became self-willed or refractory, its effort was washed away like a bundle of straw before a strong current of water. He did not know that in the place of that self-reliance and self-confidence there came a terrible diffidence regarding one's own power that made one weaker than a worm. Looking at his own life he never thought, even in a dream, that if by the grace of God thousands of things of the external world were not favourable, all the efforts on the part of mortal man, produced the contrary results, instead of the expected ones and brought him bondage upon bondage. And why should he not think so? All his life he was able to do whatever he undertook. He was able at all times to carry into practice in his own life whatever he thought to be good for man. Therefore, it is doubtful if the saint could even imagine that man could ever be in the state where his "intellect understands but the heart does not yield", that he incessantly felt within his heart the stings of a hundred scorpions for failing to make "his words correspond to his thought", that there might be a thousand agents within the mind, each wanting to carry out its own whims, that every one of the senses might be independent and disobedient and that they might lead him on to the dark and terrible suffering of despondency. Or even if he knew it, still there was a great difference between "learning by hearing, learning by seeing, and learning by actual bitter experience".

Therefore, there was a world of difference between the picture of such states of man in the mind of the saint and that in the mind of a person who was really suffering thus incessantly. That is why the saint Puri was quite ignorant of the influence of the beginningless Avidya-Maya, the power of Brahman—the Maya that was difficult to get rid of. For this reason, it is doubtful whether instead of looking upon the conduct and actions of weak men with an eye of hard-hearted aversion, he was ever able to look on them with compassion. It is only on coming in contact with the divine state of the Master as the spiritual teacher that this want of his was removed. And at last he was compelled to accept the power of Maya and the identity of Brahman and Brahma-Sakti; and bowing his head with devotion, he bade good-bye to the Dakshineswar Kali temple. We shall now begin to describe this subject.

32. Tota Puri's ignorance of the path of devotion

An austere man of renunciation, observing continence from his childhood, Tota had indeed the impression as already remarked by the Brahmani, that the path of devotion to God was a fantastic one. He did not realize that love and devotion could teach man gradually to renounce everything, including his own happiness, for the sake of his beloved, and lead him on ultimately to the realization of God; that in the ultimate development of his devotion, a true devotee and Sadhaka acquired the capacity of attaining the knowledge of perfect non-duality, and that Japa, singing of God, devotional exercises, etc., auxiliary to his Sadhana, were not, therefore, something to be scoffed at. It is for this reason that the saint did not sometimes refrain from ridiculing the devotional acts performed under the influence of great spiritual fervour. The reader, however, must not understand from this that the revered Puri was a sort of an atheist or that he had no love for God. Possessed of the control of the internal and external senses and other virtues auxiliary to his Sadhana, the revered saint himself had a calm nature and his devotion to God belonged to the Santa or calm mood. He could understand in others only that kind of devotion to God. But it never entered the mind of Sri Puri that one could go equally quickly forward towards God by loving, with the help of imagination, the great God, the Maker of the universe, as one's own friend, son, wife, or husband.

The devotee's importunate appeals to God under the influence of his loving mood, his feeling of separation, his great yearning, his pique and egoism, all centering on God and the physical movements like laughing, weeping, etc., under the influence of unrestrained divine sentiments—all these Sri Puri could not but regard as the incoherent talks or whims and antics of mad people. Nor could he ever imagine that an aspirant of this nature might quickly attain the desired result with the help of these spiritual loving moods. Therefore, there used to take place on many occasions a loving conflict between the Master and Tota Puri regarding heart-felt devotion to the Mother of the universe, the Power of Brahman and unrestrained emotionalism on the part of devotees.

33. Proof thereof: What, are you fashioning Chapatis by clapping your hands?

It was a habit with the Master from his childhood to clap his hands morning and evening for a short time and sometimes to dance under the influence of devotional moods as he went on chanting loudly the Lord's name like, "Call on Hari, call on Hari. Hari is the Teacher, the Teacher is Hari. Ah! Govinda, my vital force, my life! The mind is Krishna, the vital force is Krishna, knowledge is Krishna, meditation is Krishna, consciousness is Krishna, the intellect is Krishna, Thou art the universe, the universe is in Thee, I am a machine, Thou art the mechanic", and so on and so forth. He used to do so daily even after the attainment of Nirvikalpa Samadhi on the acquisition of the Vedantic knowledge of non-duality. One afternoon, sitting near Sri Puri, he was engaged in conversation with him till it was dusk. Seeing it was dusk, the Master stopped all conversation and was thus remembering and thinking of the divine Lord while he was clapping his hands. Seeing him do so, Tota Puri became surprised and thought, why should a man whose exceptional fitness for Vedantic discipline brought him Nirvikalpa Samadhi in such a short time practise these things like one of the lowest fitness? And he sarcastically said, "What, fashioning Chapatis by clapping your hands!" He meant to ask why he was acting like the people of the north-western parts of the country, who, without taking the help of a rolling-pin, fashion Chapatis with a quantity of

dough in their hands—by patting it with their palms producing a clapping sound. In response, the Master laughed and said, “What foolishness! I am taking the names of God and you say I am fashioning Chapatis!” At this straight and simple answer of the Master without any sting, the Puri also laughed and realized that such an act of the Master was not meaningless, though its hidden meaning was not clear to him. It was better not to pass a remark on what he did not understand.

34. What led to Tota’s giving up anger

On another occasion the Master was sitting after dusk near the Puri’s Dhuni. In the course of conversation about God the minds of both the Master and the saint ascended to a very high plane and were about to merge in the non-dual knowledge. And the Self in the Dhuni near them was, as it were, blazing, throbbingly feeling Its oneness with the Self in them and smiling blissfully by manifesting a thousand tongues! Just at that time a servant of the garden wanted to have a smoke and, preparing tobacco in his bowl, came up there for some charcoal fire and started taking it by putting a piece of burning wood from the Dhuni into his bowl. Merged in conversation with the Master and enjoying the bliss of the non-dual Brahman within, the saint had not so long been aware of his coming and taking charcoal fire from the Dhuni. Now all of a sudden he noticed that and, extremely annoyed and angry, began to call him names and shook the pair of tongs at him threateningly. For, we have already said that the holy men of the Naga denominations worship and show great respect to fire in the form of Dhuni.

Raising a roar of laughter in the state of partial normal consciousness, the Master exclaimed at this behaviour of the Puri, “Ah, wretchedness! Ah, forgetfulness!” He said it over and over again, laughed and rolled on the ground. Tota was surprised to see that mood of the Master and said, “Why are you doing like that? Don’t you see how wrong it was on the part of the man?” The Master laughed and said, “Yes that is true; but I see at the same time the depth of your knowledge of Brahman! Just now you were saying ‘there is nothing except Brahman and all things and persons in the universe are merely Its manifestations’. But forgetting everything the very next

moment you are ready to beat a man! This is why I laugh to think of the omnipotence of Maya." Hearing this, Tota became serious and silent for a short time and then said, "You are quite right. Under the influence of anger I forgot everything indeed. Anger is surely a very nasty thing. I give it up this very moment." As a matter of fact, since that day the Swami was never seen to be angry again.

35. Man cannot realize God till Maya moves away compassionately from his path

The Master used to say, " 'Caught in the net of the five elements Brahman weeps.' You may shut your eyes and try to persuade yourself that there is no thorn and no prick, but as soon as the hand touches the thorn it pricks and you cry out in pain. Similarly, you may do your best to persuade your mind that you have no birth or death, no vice or virtue, no pain or pleasure, no hunger or thirst, that you are the immutable Self, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Itself; but as soon as your body falls a prey to some disease or your mind is attracted by the pleasure of the passing moments, arising from lust or gold, tempted by the objects of enjoyments such as sights, tastes, etc., you happen suddenly to do something wrong. Delusion, anguish, pain and the like crop up and harass you very much, making you forget all your discrimination and carefully-drawn conclusions. Therefore, know it for certain, my child, that no one can have Self-knowledge and be freed from the misery of the world till the grace of God descends on him and Maya opens the door to liberation and moves away. Have you not heard the *Chandi*[1] say, 'When She becomes gracious, She confers boons which cause people's liberation.' Nothing is possible if Mother does not bestow Her grace and move away from the path."

36. An example thereof. The story of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana travelling in the forest

"Rama, Sita and Lakshmana were going through the forest. The path in the forest was narrow— not even two could go abreast. Rama walked in front with bow in hand; Sita followed; and Lakshmana came after her with

bow and arrows. Lakshmana had so much devotion to, and love for Rama that he had a desire in his mind always to see his form, blue in complexion, like a newly formed cloud. But as Sita was between them, he could not see Rama as they were walking, and so became, anxious to see him. The intelligent Sita understood it and, sympathizing with Lakshmana in his sorrow, moved a little to one side, stood and said to him, "There—see." It was then that Lakshmana saw to his heart's content the form of Rama, his chosen Ideal. Similarly, Maya, represented by Sita, stands between the Jiva and Isvara. Know it for certain that the Jiva who is represented by Lakshmana cannot see God till, feeling sympathy with him, she moves to one side. The moment she bestows her grace, the Jiva is blessed with a vision of Narayana, represented by Rama in the example and he is relieved from all the trials and tribulations of the world. Otherwise, however much you may discriminate and draw logical conclusions, it would be of no avail. It is said that one grain of ptychotis digests one hundred grains of rice; but when there is a disorder in the stomach even one hundred grains of ptychotis cannot digest a single grain of rice. This is a good analogy."

37. Tota did not know that his high state was due to the grace of the divine Mother

Swami Tota Puri was a recipient of the grace of the Mother of the universe from his birth. He was in possession, from his childhood, of good impressions, a sincere mind, the company of a great Yogi and a firm and strong body. Maya, the power of the Lord, did not show him her dreadful and alldevouring form, horrible as the shadow of death, and never made him fall into the snares of Her bewitching forms of spiritual ignorance. Therefore, it became an easy affair for him to go forward with the help of his individual effort and perseverance, attain Nirvikalpa Samadhi, realize God, and acquire Self-knowledge. How could he understand that the divine Mother Herself had removed all obstacles and impediments with Her own hands from the path of his progress and Herself moved away from it? Now, after so long a time, the Mother was pleased to explain it to Swami Puri. He now got the opportunity of detecting that mistake of his mind.

38. Tota Puri's illness

The revered Puri had the robust physique found in the north-western parts of India. He never knew what illness, indigestion and a hundred other kinds of bodily indispositions were. Whatever he ate he digested. He was never in want of deep sleep wherever he was. And mental bliss and peace arising from the knowledge and direct realization of God flowed in his mind in incessant streams in a hundred channels. Attracted by the love and respect of the Master, he had stayed with him for a few months, but the water of Bengal, and its hot, heavy air full of humidity told upon his health and his firm body fell an easy prey to illness. He had a severe attack of blood dysentery. On account of the painful wringing of the intestines, day and night, his mind, although calm and tranquil and accustomed to Samadhi, moved away from its existence-in-Brahman to come down to the body. "Brahman had been caught in the net of the five elements"; what was the way out now except the grace of the divine Mother, the ruler over all!

39. Tota disregarded the indication of his mind

For some time past, before he fell ill, his careful mind abiding in Brahman made it known to him that, inasmuch as the body was not keeping well, it was not reasonable that he should remain any longer there. But should he go away out of love for his body, leaving behind the wonderful company of the Master? The body was a "cage made of bones and flesh", full of blood and other filthy fluids and abounding in various kinds of germs and worms. Its very existence has been asserted in the Vedanta Sastra to be a delusion. And looking upon such a body as "mine", should he go away hurriedly forsaking the company of that divine man, the source of infinite bliss? And was it not possible that the diseases of the body and other troubles might be contracted wherever he went? And what fear had he, even if diseases and other troubles came upon him? It was the body that would suffer, become emaciated or at most be destroyed. But what was that to him? He had, without the shadow of a doubt, seen and felt clearly that he was the Self unattached and immutable and he had never any relation with the body; what should he then be afraid of? These and other similar thoughts saved the revered Puri from being restless.

40. Tota went to bid good-bye to the Master but was unable to do so. His illness increased

Gradually, as the pain increased a little, the strong Swami Puri felt a desire to leave the place. He went to the Master from time to time to take leave of him, but, absorbed in talks on divine topics, he forgot completely to mention that. And when he happened to remember to take leave of the Master, some one from within, he felt, stopped his mouth for the time being; feeling hesitant to speak out, the Swami thought that he would better talk of it on the morrow and not on that day. After taking such a decision and having had a conversation on the Vedanta with the Master, the Swami Tota would return to his seat under the Panchavati. Time passed. The Swami's body became weaker and the disease grew more acute. Seeing that the Swami's body was thus daily becoming emaciated, the Master had in the meantime made arrangements for his special diet and a little medicine and other remedies. But, in spite of all that, the illness went on worsening. The Master began to take care of and serve him as far as it lay in his power, by asking Mathur to make a special arrangement of medicine, diet, etc. Up till now it was only in the body that the Swami felt much pain, but was having perfect peace of mind; he could forget all physical pains by merging the mind at will in Samadhi, for, up till then, he retained full control over his mind.

41. Unable to control the mind Tota went to give up his body in the Ganga; his vision of the divine Mother as the universe

It was night. The pain in the intestines had much increased. That pain did not allow the Swami even to lie quiet. He tried to lie down a little but could not and sat up immediately. But there was no relief even then. He thought, "Let me merge the mind in meditation and let anything happen to the body." But scarcely had he brought the mind to rest by its withdrawal from the body, when it turned sharply towards the pain in the intestines. He tried again, and again the same thing happened. Hardly had the mind reached the plane of Samadhi where the body was forgotten, when it came down on account of the pain. He failed as many times as he attempted. The Swami then became terribly annoyed with his own body. He thought, "Even my

mind is not under my control today on account of the trouble from this ‘cage of bones and flesh’. Away with this nuisance of a body! I have undoubtedly known that I am not the body; why do I then remain in this rotten body and suffer pain? What is the utility of preserving it any more? I will put an end to all suffering by immersing it in the Ganga at this dead of night.” Thinking so and fixing the mind with great care on the thought of Brahman, the “naked one” slowly got down into the water and gradually waded further, into deeper water. But was the deep Bhagirathi in truth dry tonight? Or was it only the external projection of his mental picture? Who could say? Tota almost reached the other bank but could not get water deep enough for drowning himself in. When, gradually, at last the trees and houses on the other bank began to be visible like shadows in the deep darkness of the night, Tota was surprised and thought, “What strange divine Maya is this? Tonight there is not sufficient water in the river even to drown oneself in! What strange unheard-of play of God?” And immediately some one, as it were from within, pulled off the veil over his intellect. Tota’s mind was dazzled by a bright light and he saw, “Mother, Mother, Mother; Mother, the origin of the universe, Mother the unthinkable Power; Mother in land and Mother in water; the body is Mother, and the mind is Mother; illness is Mother, and health is Mother; knowledge is Mother, and ignorance is Mother; life is Mother, and death is Mother; everything I see, hear, think or imagine is Mother; She makes ‘nay’ of ‘yea’ and ‘yea’ of ‘nay’! As long as one is in the body one has no power to be free from Her influence, no, not even to die, till She wills! It is that Mother again who is also beyond body, mind and intellect—the Mother, the supreme ‘fourth’, devoid of all attributes. That One whom Tota has so long been worshipping as Brahman and to whom he offered his heart-felt love and devotion was this very Mother! Siva and Sakti in One who was ever existing in the form of Hara-Gauri!— Brahman and Brahma-Sakti are one and the same!”

42. Tota gave up his determination to die

Wading his way through the water in the same manner in which he had gone, Tota began to return, with his heart full of devotion directly experiencing at that dead of night the unthinkable, unmanifest and all-

pervading form of the Mother of the universe, with all the quarters of the heavens reverberating with the profound cries of “Mother” and at the same time completely offering himself as an oblation at Her feet. Though there was pain in the body, there was now no feeling of it. His heart was now beside itself with an unprecedented bliss arising from the memory of Samadhi. The Swami came slowly to the Dhuni under the Panchavati, sat up there and spent the rest of the night in meditation and repetition of the name of the divine Mother.

43. Tota had, as the result of his illness, the knowledge that Brahman and the power of Brahman were one and the same

As soon as it was morning, the Master came to enquire about his health and found him a different person altogether! His face was beaming with bliss, lips blooming with a smile, and his body, free from all illness whatever! Tota asked the Master by a sign to sit near him and described slowly all the events of the night. “It is the disease”, said he, “that has acted as a friend to me: I had the vision of the Mother of the universe last night and am freed from the disease by Her grace. Ah, how ignorant I was so long! Well, please persuade your Mother now to allow me to leave this place. I am now convinced that it was She who kept me confined here somehow or other in order to teach me this Truth. It cannot be otherwise: for, I thought long ago of going away from this place, and went to you over and over again to take leave of you. But some one, as it were, diverted my mind to other topics and prevented me every time from mentioning it to you.” The Master said smilingly, “Well, you did not accept the Mother before and argued with me saying that Sakti was unreal! But you have now seen Her yourself and direct experience has got the better of your arguments. She has convinced me already of the fact that just as fire and its burning power are not different, so, Brahman, and the power of Brahman are not different, but one and the same.”

44. Tota accepted the divine Mother and left

When they heard the morning tune of the Nahabat, both the great souls bound to each other in the relation of teacher and disciple like Siva and Rama, stood up, went to the temple of the divine Mother and prostrated themselves before Her holy image. Both of them felt in their heart of hearts that the Mother was pleased and had graciously given Tota permission to leave that place. A few days later, he took leave of the Master, left the Dakshineswar Kali temple and started westward. This was his first and last visit to that temple; for Swami Puri never again came thither.

45. Tota's knowledge of the art of converting baser metals into gold — alchemy

One word more, and we shall have said everything we heard from the Master himself about Tota Puri. The Puri believed in alchemy. Not only did he have a belief but said to the Master that he, by virtue of that knowledge, had converted on several occasions copper and other baser metals into gold. Tota used to say that the ancient Paramahamsas of his community knew the art and he inherited the knowledge from them lineally. He said besides, "It is completely forbidden to serve one's selfish interest or enjoy luxury with the help of this art. There is the curse of the teachers on such use. But there live in the community many holy men and the head of the community has sometimes to go with them from one place of pilgrimage to another. At that time arrangements have to be made for their food and other necessities. The teacher has, however, allowed us to make use of this knowledge for that purpose, if we are ever in need of money.'

46. The conclusion

It is thus that the Bhairavi Brahmani, and Tota Puri, the knower of Brahman, were blessed, having reached perfection in their particular paths with the help of the Master as the spiritual teacher. We can also very well infer from it that the other subsidiary spiritual teachers of the Master were similarly imbued with spiritual catholicity with his help.

Footnote

1. III. 5. 1.—Tr.

1. The Bhairava is the masculine gender, while Bhairavi is the feminine; insinuation was that she might have a paramour.—Tr.

1. Every Tuesday is regarded as auspicious for the worship of the divine Mother, hence all Tuesdays have got the qualification, “auspicious”.—Tr.

1. Swami Vivekananda started for the second time for England and America in the month of June 1899. A short time after this, one day, a man came to the monastery at Belur, introduced himself as Chandra and stayed there for about a month. Swami Brahmananda always used to live in the monastery at that time. We have seen this person have much private talk with him. We have been told that he asked the Swami again and again, "Are you aware of anything here?" He meant, whether the Swami felt the living presence of the Master there.

Chandra used to say that whatever the Master had said about him had turned out to be true. The only thing that even then remained unverified as true was the Master's promise to appear before him at the time of his death. He used to go to the shrine-room at the monastery every day and perform Japa and meditation with great devotion for a long time. Tears of love for God would flow out of his eyes at that time. When asked by anybody anything about the Master, he used to say with great delight what he knew of him. He appeared to us to be a man of a quiet nature. Seeing that he always sat quiet in one place and remained with his eyes shut, some one asked him derisively one day, "Are you, sir, in the habit of taking opium?" "What offence have I given you" said he humbly, "that you speak so?" When he went to the temple and made salutations, for the first time, he addressed the Master's holy image as "elder brother" and filled with ardent affection and intense love shed profuse tears. At first sight, he appeared to be an ordinary man. There was no pomp of ochre cloth, sandal-paste marks on the forehead, etc., about him. He had a very ordinary cloth and an upper garment on with an umbrella and a canvas bag in his hands. He had another cloth, a towel and perhaps a pot used for drinking water, in the bag. He said that he travelled very often from one place of pilgrimage to another that way. Swami Brahmananda requested him very courteously and respectfully to live at the monastery for all his life. He also agreed and said, "I shall come and live here after making some arrangement of the landed property at home." But he never turned up to the monastery again. The person spoken of as Chandra in the text was perhaps the same man.

1. T*he Ashtavakra Samhita.*

2. The word Karana means: (1) wine, (2) cause i.e., the cause of the universe; and the word Siddhi means: (1) hemp, (2) perfection, i.e., oneness with God. Hence by the law of association of ideas, the Master used to be reminded of the second meanings when the words were uttered, and merged into Samadhi.—Tr.

1. This is a saying current among holy men who have renounced the world. The meaning of the saying is that the mind of a holy man wandering incessantly does not get attached to any thing or person.

1. Sloka 2.—Tr.

1. 1. 56.

PART FOUR

SRI RAMAKRISHNA
THE GREAT MASTER

AS THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER (II)

PREFACE

This is the Fourth Part of *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* and is the second half of "AS THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER". Acquainted so far with the middle part of the life of Sri Ramakrishna, the reader may ask why we have adopted an unchronological method and why the story of the perfected state of the Master's life has been told before the events of his life from his birth to the time of his Sadhana. We reply:

Firstly, we had no previous plan of writing the life of this extraordinary personage. We were not bold enough to cherish the high hope that it was ever possible for puny creatures like ourselves to write properly the story of his highly catholic life. It was by force of circumstances that we intended to set our hand to it and tell the readers of the *Udbodhan,*[1] a few events of the life of Sri Ramakrishna. We did not then know that we would have to proceed so far. It is, therefore, no wonder that later events came to be described before the earlier ones.

Secondly, many tried before us to record the wonderful events of the life of Sri Ramakrishna and the story of his extraordinary Sadhana. Although those records are seen to contain a few errors in some places, almost all the events of the Master's life on the whole have been published through them. Instead of wasting our energy in recording the same facts over again, we thought it reasonable to explain to the reader the Master's extraordinary divine ideas and ideals, which were not explained before. Again, if one does not understand what is meant by his being established in Bhavamukha or by the natural manifestation in him of the mood of the Guru, one cannot at all understand his wonderful character, uncommon actions and unique ideas and ideals. This was why we tried at the very beginning to explain them to the reader.

Some will perhaps raise an objection and say, "But, in setting about to explain in different places of your book, the Master's particular ideas and

actions, you have tried to describe them to the reader in the way you yourself have understood them. Consequently, your own intelligence and discrimination have been made the standard of his incomprehensible character and ideas. Have you not lowered him in the estimation of people by thus admitting indirectly that your intelligence and discrimination can comprehend the incomprehensible Master? Would it not have been better if, instead of doing so, you had stopped after accurately recording the facts? In that case, the record would not have lowered the Master in any one's esteem and people could have understood the meanings of his ideas and actions in their own way."

This is a statement which is plausible but contains no substance, for man has been taking and will ever take the help of his senses, mind and intellect in understanding and comprehending all matters. He has no alternative. But this does not prove that his mind, intellect, etc., are greater than the object they try to comprehend. Although man knows that time, space, universe, self, God and other unlimited entities are beyond mind and intellect, he has always been trying to grasp and understand them through these faculties. But we do not consider this effort to understand all that to be wrong or to be a limitation. This endeavour will broaden his mind and intellect and do him immense good.

Therefore, if we study in this way the extraordinary ideas and actions of great personages, we are ourselves benefited and they are by no means limited or dwarfed. In accordance with the degree of purity and power of penetration of their minds and intellects, produced by Sadhana, people can more or less understand and explain the divine ideas and actions of those great souls. A person, with greater spiritual Sadhana will be able to understand the character of Sri Ramakrishna more deeply than we. There is, therefore, nothing wrong in applying our minds and intellects to the understanding of that divine character. It will be sufficient if we guard ourselves against one mistake, viz., the notion that we have fathomed the whole depth of the Master's character. All possibility of vain doubts will thus be guarded against if only we can keep this fact constantly before our minds.

AUTHOR

Footnote

1. A Bengali monthly published by the Ramakrishna Mission, from 1, Udbodhan Lane, Baghbazar, Calcutta, in which the whole of this book was published as articles before it came out in the form of a book.—Tr.

CHAPTER I
VAISHNAVACHARAN AND GAURI

> Those men also who, full of faith and free from malice, constantly practise this teaching of Mine, are freed from all work (i.e., the idea of being its agent).
>
> Gita III. 31

1. The ignorance of the people of Calcutta about the Master's relation as the spiritual teacher to the holy men and aspirants who came to Dakshineswar

It is the general impression of the public of Calcutta that the Master transmitted spirituality or deepened it in Kesav Chandra sen and a few other modern-minded Hindus who were educated in the English manner and were imbued with the Western ideas and ideals. But most people of this city are ignorant of the fact that long before they knew of the Master's residence at Dakshi-neswar, eminent holy Persons, Sadhakas and Pandits well versed in the Sastras, had come to the Master from all parts of Bengal and northern India and, having their languid religious life vivified by the Master's power as the spiritual teacher and his blazing, burning religious ideal, had gone away to impart that new power and ideal to many persons elsewhere.

2. "Bees come of themselves when flowers blossom." Fitness for imparting religion is necessary; preaching is otherwise vain

The Master used to say, "As soon as flowers blossom, bees come of themselves. They need not be invited. When love for and devotion to God become truly manifested in you, all those who have sacrificed their lives or have resolved to do so in quest of God, in other words, for the attainment of

truth, cannot but come to you under the influence of an inexplicable spiritual law." So it was indeed the Master's opinion that one should first of all realize God, and have His vision and grace. Thus armed with the power of working for the real good of humanity, one should have His command before proceeding to preach religion or work for the good of the many. Otherwise, as the Master said, "Who will accept your words? Why should people in general accept or give ear to what you ask them to do?"

3. All are equally blind in respect of spiritual matters

We are all, in truth, sailing in the same boat. Though, puffed up with pride, we may consider ourselves superior to others, living all the while in this vain world with its round of birth, dotage, and death and bristling with misery, poverty and dark ignorance, our miserable condition—that urge of the senses, that avarice, that greed and that constant fear of death—continues for ever the same, however much we may develop our machinery, make progress in the natural sciences and know a few properties of some substances in the realm of Maya, the universal Mother capable of making the impossible possible. We are living in the same dismal unbroken darkness of ignorance regarding problems: "Who am I?" "Why am I here?" "Where shall I go?" "What is the aim of this game of mine—a game in which I attempt to know the truth with the help of those very five senses, mind and intellect, which themselves deceive me at every step and lead me ever astray?" "Will ever a way to liberation out of its clutches be found?" Everybody in this world lacks true knowledge and is ready to receive it. But who is to give it to him? If, in this respect, anybody has actually anything to give, let him give as much as he can. But deluded a hundred times, man does not understand this. And urged by the desire for name and fame and sundry selfish motives, he hastens to give or feigns to give what he does not possess and, like the blind leading the blind, both come to grief—the instructor and the instructed together!

4. How the Master preached religion

The Master, therefore, moved along a path diametrically opposed to that of all others of the world. He lived in one place his whole life, calm and tranquil and free from anxiety and practised to the fullest extent renunciation, detachment, self-control, etc., and converted himself thoroughly into an instrument in the hands of the divine Mother, having realized the integral truth and blazed the trail of work of real benefit to the world. He showed that, having attained Reality, the moment he opened the store-house of his knowledge for distribution, people thirsting for knowledge began to pour in uninvited, nobody knew whence. And purified by his divine look and touch, they considered themselves blessed and, spreading that new idea wherever they went, became the source of blessing to others without number. For, wherever we are, we naturally give expression to the mass of ideas that exist within us. The Master used to say in the simple language of a villager: "One's belchings smell of the things one has taken. Eat cucumber, your belchings will smell cucumber; eat radish, they will smell radish."

5. The state in which the Master was when he met the Brahmani

An important event in the Master's life is his meeting the Bhairavi Brahmani. It is seen from this time onward that just as on the one hand he engaged himself deeply in disciplines in strict accordance with the injunctions of the scriptures and was progressing with firm, quick steps in them, even so, on the other hand, the mood of the spiritual teacher, clearly and unmistakingly began to unfold itself in him. But it cannot be said that the aforesaid mood had not been at all present in him before then. For, in the previous chapters, we have brought it to the notice of the reader that the manifestation of the power of the spiritual teacher, more or less, occurred in his life at all times from his childhood, and that even his teachers, who initiated him, got the opportunity of perfecting their own spiritual states by the removal of their deficiencies, flaws and lassitude, with the help of the Master's power as the spiritual teacher.

6. What others understood about the exalted state of the Master

Before the Brahmani came, the Master's extraordinary eagerness and love of God were regarded, to a great extent, as insanity and physical illness, and he was placed under the treatment of eminent physicians. A physician from eastern Bengal, himself a Sadhaka, happened to see him in the house of Gangaprasad Sen, where the Master had come for treatment. Although he pointed out that his bodily symptoms were the extra ordinary changes produced by the practice of Yoga, nobody took his statement seriously. All, including Mathur, were certain that they were the signs of insanity, though combined with the love of God. But the learned Brahmani, well versed in devotional scriptures, was the first to point out to all that all those symptoms were extraordinary bodily changes due to corresponding mental states, produced by uncommon love of God, so rare that even the gods covet to possess them in vain. She, however, did not stop with merely mentioning this to others. She quoted chapter and verse from the devotional scriptures to show that such physical changes were due to super-normal mental states and had appeared, from time to time, in the lives of past teachers and Yogis—of Sri Radha, the supreme lady of Vraja, the embodiment of love divine, and of Sri Krishna Chaitanya, the great lord. She then proved her statements by showing the similarity of the signs recorded in the scriptures to those manifested in the Master's body. When she did so, the Master, of course, began to rejoice like a boy strengthened by the assurance of his mother; and all the people of the Kali temple, including Mathur, were not a little astonished. Besides, their wonder knew no bounds when the Brahmani said to Mathur, "Please bring Pandits, well versed in the Sastras; I am ready to convince them of the truth of my words."

7. Mathur's decision at Brahmani's request to convene a meeting of the Pandits well versed in scriptures, to discuss the Master's condition

But of what avail was it that they were astonished? Who could so suddenly repose his faith in the words and scholarship of an unknown woman who lived on alms and so was not to be taken seriously? Therefore, the words of the Bhairavi Brahmani would have gone the way of those of the physician of eastern Bengal, would have surely failed to make an

impression on Mathur and others, had the Master not made an eager request which made the matter stand on quite a different footing. The childlike Master said importunately to Mathur, "Good scholars must be brought and what the Brahmani says must be tested." The wealthy Mathur thought, "Where is the harm in doing so? So much money is being spent on doctors and medicine for the junior Bhattacharya. When the scholars come and refute the Brahmani's words by quoting the authority of the scriptures, which they are sure to do, at least one good result is sure to follow, viz., believing in the words of the scholars, the sincere soul of the junior Bhattacharya will at least be finally convinced that he has contracted a disease. Consequently, he may form a desire to control his mind. A person becomes mad when, instead of making an effort to keep his thoughts and feelings under control, he gives them free rein to run amuck, thinking, 'What I do and understand is right, and what others understand and ask me to do is wrong.' That is exactly the way how a person becomes insane. And there is no doubt that his mental derangement, as also his physical disease, will be aggravated if, instead of inviting scholars, the Bhattacharya is allowed to believe freely in the words of the Brahmani." Thinking thus, and partly out of curiosity and partly out of love for the Master, Mathur, we clearly understand, agreed to convene a meeting of Pandits at the Master's request.

8. Vaishnavacharan and Gauri of Indes were invited

Vaishnavacharan had at that time a great reputation in the community of the Pandits of Calcutta. Again, his name and fame spread amongst the people in general also, as he read and explained beautifully the *Bhagavata* to the public in various parts of the country. This was how the Master, Mathur and the Brahmani had heard of him before. Mathur chose to invite him; and as they knew of the uncommon power and scholarship of Pandit Gauri of Indes, of Virbhum, Mathur resolved to invite him also. This was how Vaishnavacharan and Gauri came to Dakshineswar. We heard from the Master now and again many things about them. We shall now set out before the reader what we came to know of them.

9. How famous Vaishnavacharan then was

Vaishnavacharan was not only a scholar but was also known to the public as a devout aspirant. His love for God and keen insight into the philosophical scriptures—especially into devotional ones—made him, it may be said, a leader of the then Vaishnava community. That community always gave him the first place at all ceremonies and received him with respectful invitations. When a conclusion concerning any religious matter had to be arrived at, they would always consult him and depend on his decision. Again, many devout aspirants approached him to enquire about the right paths of Sadhana and followed his advice faithfully. It is not surprising, therefore, that Mathur resolved to bring Vaishnavacharan for ascertaining, whether the condition of the Master was due to devotion in excess or to some physical disease.

10. The Brahmani's prescription for curing the burning sensation in the Master's body

In the meantime, the Brahmani obtained one important proof of the truth of her opinion on the condition of the Master, which brought as much joy to herself as surprise to others. It was this: Some time before the Brahmani arrived, the Master had been suffering terribly from an intense burning sensation all over his body. Treatments of many sorts were administered but the cure was as far away as ever. We were told by the Master himself that the pain, starting with sunrise, went on increasing as the day advanced, till it became unbearable at midday, when he had to keep his body immersed in the water of the Ganga for two or three hours, with a wet towel placed on his head. He had to come out of water even against his will, lest he should fall a prey to some other disease due to cold. Therefore, he had to shut all the doors and windows of the proprietor's mansion and roll on its marble floor carefully wetted with a piece of damp cloth.

No sooner had the Brahmani come to know of it than she came to a different conclusion. She said that it was not a disease; it had come on him as the result of his intense spirituality or his love for God. She went on to say that such physical counterparts of the mental changes, due to extreme

eagerness for the realization of God, had very often been seen in the lives of Sri Radharani and Sri Chaitanya. The medicine for curing this "disease" was also extraordinary, viz., to adorn the patient with garlands of sweet, scented flowers and to smear his body with fragrant sandal-paste.

None, not even Mathur, it is superfluous to say, could suppress laughter at the Brahmani's "diagnosis" of the "disease", let alone their not believing in the treatment. They thought within themselves, "How preposterous it is for her to say that it was not a disease, when it could not at all be alleviated even by taking so much medicine and using so many oils like Madhyamanarayana, Vishnu and the like!" But no one could have any objection to the simple medicine prescribed by the Brahmani, which was so easily available. The patient would himself give it up in a day or two if he did not derive any benefit from it. The person of the Master was, therefore, adorned with sandal-paste and garlands of flowers in accordance with the Brahmani's prescription; and, to the astonishment of all, the burning sensation of the Master's body absolutely disappeared in three days. But did the sceptical mind believe the truth so easily? It said, "It must have happened in the way of the well known analogy of the Kakataliya, 'the crow and the palm-fruit'. The last instalment of the Vishnu oil given to Bhattacharya for use was absolutely genuine; this was clear from the very manner in which the physician spoke. That oil was producing a good effect and the whole of the pain would have been cured by its use in a day or two, just when the Brahmani prescribed the smearing of the sandal-paste. That was how it had happened; but the use of that oil should be continued, whatever the Brahmani might say or prescribe!"

11. The Brahmani's prescription for curing the Master's inordinate hunger

There appeared, shortly afterwards, on the Master's body another "disease". This also, we were told by the Master himself, was cured in three days when a simple prescription of the Brahmani was followed. The Master said, "I felt an inordinate hunger at that time. I could not have my fill however much I ate. Now I ate, now I felt hungry again as if I had not eaten anything." I felt equally hungry, whether I took food or not; night and day

that desire for eating prevailed; it had no cessation. I thought, ‘What is this disease again?’ I spoke about it to the Brahmani. She said, ‘Fear not, my child. Such states, it is written in the scriptures, come from time to time, on the travellers on the path to the realization of God. I will cure you of it.’ So saying she asked Mathur to keep arranged within the room stacks of all kinds of food, from flattened and parched rice to Sandes, Rasagolla, Luchi and other things. Then she told me, ‘My child, remain in this room day and night and eat whatever and whenever you like.’ I remained in that room, walked up and down, looked on those stacks of food and handled them, now eating something from one stack, now from another. Three days passed in this way, when the inordinate hunger left me and I felt relieved.”

12. These states arise as the result of the practice of Yoga. What we saw about that kind of hunger of the Master

We have heard that Sadhakas had felt such excessive hunger, etc., both before and after the state of Yoga, or when the merging of the mind in God became easy to them. And we were filled with surprise to observe such a state many a time before in the life of the Master. But the state of the Master, we saw, was a little different. During this period the Master did not remain constantly afflicted with hunger as on the occasions mentioned earlier. Sometimes we saw him, in the state of Bhava, taking four or more times the food that he usually took, without feeling any physical discomfort. The reader will understand the matter easily if we mention here a few such events.

13. The first example: he took a big piece of sar

We have already given[1] the reader one instance. We narrated earlier in the book, in connection with the Master’s divine Lila with women devotees, how some ladies of Baghbazar went to Dakshineswar to pay a visit to the Master with a big piece of Sar (cream) brought from the shop of the sweetmeat-maker Bhola, how failing to meet him there, they went with great difficulty to the house of Mahendranath Gupta, the teacher, where they met him, how Pranakrishna Mukhopadhyaya, whom the Master used to

call the “fat Brahmin”, came suddenly there, and how those ladies hid themselves under the bedstead on which the Master sat and so on. We also told the reader how the Master came to Dakshineswar having taken his meal in Calcutta and how he felt hungry once more that night and ate almost the whole of the Sar brought by the ladies. We shall now mention here a few such instances. We say “a few instances” because such events happened almost daily in the Master’s life. It is, therefore, impossible to record all of them.

14. Second example: he ate two pounds of sweets and parched rice at Kamarpukur

Old people tell us even today that until malaria broke out for the first time and a greater part of Bengal—of profuse water and fruits, and green with paddy plants—was depopulated by its fury, the climate of the districts of Hoogly, Burdwan, etc., was not in any way inferior to that of the northwestern parts of India. They say that in those days people used to go to Burdwan and such other places for a change of climate. Kamarpukur is situated about twenty-five miles off Burdwan. The climate of the former place also was conducive to health in those days. We have already said that, on account of the practice of extraordinary austerities for twelve years and constantly remaining in ecstasy afterwards, without paying any heed to the body, even the firm physique of the Master became gradually unfit to undergo physical labour and sometimes was assailed by severe diseases. That was why, when his Sadhana was complete, the Master would go for a change to Kamarpukur and some other neighbouring places every year for the Chaturmasya [1] and at the end of the tour he would return to Calcutta. His nephew and faithful attendant, Hriday, went with him. Mathur Babu not only paid the Master’s passage to and from Kamarpukur, but sent with him all the provision and other necessary articles, lest he should lack anything in that small village. When a mother sends for the first time her daughter to the house of the latter’s father-in-law, she sends with her even such trifling things as tooth-picks and wicks of lamps. Exactly in the same way did Mathur Babu and his devout wife, Smt. Jagadamba Dasi, very often send everything necessary for starting a new home for the Master when he went

to Kamarpukur. For, it was not unknown to them that the household of the Master at that village was like that of Siva—there had not been the slightest idea of providing anything, for the future, from the time of his forefathers. The practice of that family was to remain firm on the path of righteousness, living on whatever might be available. They managed the household with the paddy produced annually on half an acre of the trust land of Raghuvir. The grocer's shop in the village was the store of this pure, holy family; it was only when a little money was available from farewell gifts etc., that articles of household use, salt, oil, vegetables, etc., were purchased out of that store for that day; otherwise they lived happily on rice and wild greens available without effort on the bank of the pond. And at all times and in all matters, they relied wholly on the living presence of Raghuvir, their family deity. As he knew all these things, Mathur Babu had the strong desire to buy a few Bighas of paddy land and make a trust of it in the name of Sri Raghuvir. And it was from the same motive that he sent all necessary household articles with the Master.

The Master, we have said earlier, used to come every year to Kamarpukur during the Chaturmasya. One year, when malaria had already made its appearance in those parts and was decimating the population, he came and suffered from it a great deal. This made him resolve not to come to his native village any more and never again did he come. He made that resolve about eight or ten years before he passed away. But this is to anticipate. He came to Kamarpukur that year. There was constantly a crowd of neighbours, men and women, who came to see him and listen to his religious talks. A current of bliss flowed incessantly there. All the ladies of the house, with him in their midst, were engaged joyfully in serving him and those who came to see him. No one knew how days of joy were slipping away one after another. Ramlal's mother, the mistress, of the house, with sister Lakshmi, her daughter, and the supremely revered Holy Mother were there in the house.

The night had advanced three hours. The neighbours, men and women, had taken leave for the night and had gone home. The Master had been suffering for a few days from indigestion and had been taking nothing but sago and barley-water at night. He took milk and barley that night also and

went to bed. The ladies of the house took their meal last of all and were about to retire for the night having finished their day's duties.

The Master suddenly opened the door of his bedroom, came out staggering in Bhavasamadhi and, addressing Ramlal's mother and others, said, "I see, you are all gone to bed; why have you done so before giving me anything to eat?"

Ramlal's mother: "Ah, how is that? Have you not taken your meal just now?"

The Master: "When did I? I came from Dakshineswar just now. When did you feed me?"

All the ladies wondered at this and looked at one another's face. They realized that he was speaking thus in Bhavasamadhi. But what could they do? There was no food whatever in the house that could be given him. What was the way out then? Ramlal's mother had therefore to say hesitatingly, "There is nothing eatable except parched rice in the house now. Will you take parched rice? Why don't you take it? That will not do harm to your stomach." Saying so, she brought some on a plate and placed it before the Master. He saw it and turning about angrily like a boy, said, "I will not take merely parched rice." She tried to persuade him and said, "You are suffering from stomach troubles; nothing else will suit you. Moreover, all the shops are closed now at this hour of the night and so it is not possible to go and buy sago or barley for you. Take this small quantity tonight; I will cook for you soup and rice as soon as I rise tomorrow morning", and so on. But he would not lend his ear to it. Like a sensitive, importunate boy the Master repeated the same words, "I will not eat it."

There being no alternative, Ramlal was sent out to the shop. He called the shopkeeper repeatedly and roused him from sleep. He purchased two pounds of sweets and brought them. Together with parched rice, a little more than sufficient for a normal man, they were placed on a plate. Now the Master sat joyfully to eat and consumed the whole of it. All the household then became afraid and thought, "Ah, a person, suffering from stomach trouble; who lives on sago and barley for half the days of the month, has taken so much food so late at night! Something serious is sure to happen tomorrow." But, strange to say, the Master was seen to be all right on the

morrow. No discomfort whatever was felt by him on account of the food taken the previous night.

15. Third example: he ate about five pounds of boiled rice with a tiny Maurala fish of sauce

On another occasion, when the Master was living in Kamarpukur he was taken to Jayramvati, the native village of his father-in-law. The Master took his meal and went to bed, but shortly afterwards got up and said, “I am very hungry.” The ladies of the house were beside themselves with anxiety. What could they give him to eat? There was nothing in the house, for the annual Sraddha of some one of the forefathers, or some such ceremony, had been performed on that day and many people had been fed, and so no food was left over. There was some boiled rice steeped in cold water. When the Holy Mother mentioned this hesitatingly to the Master, he asked her to bring it. She however said that there was no curry.

The Master said, “Why don’t you try to find a little? Did you not cook fish with chilli and turmeric? Why don’t you see whether a little of that is left over?”

The Holy Mother looked into the cooking pot and found a tiny Maurala fish with a little paste-like soup sticking to it. So she had to bring it. The Master was delighted to see it. He sat to eat that boiled rice steeped in water, at that dead of night, ate up a quantity weighing about five pounds, with that tiny fish for sauce and was at rest.

16. Fourth example: he ate two pounds of sweet pudding at midnight at Dakshineswar

The same thing happened occasionally while he was at Dakshineswar. One night, at about twelve, the Master got up, called Ramlal and said, “I am very hungry.” What was to be done? Generally there were sweets and other eatables in Stock on other days; but on that occasion there was nothing in the room. Ramlal at last went to the Nahavat and informed the Holy Mother and the women devotees about it. They got up very hurriedly, and made a fire by means of straw and firewood and prepared about two pounds of

Halwa (sweet pudding), sent it to the Master's room in a big stone cup full to the brim. One of the women devotees brought it there. She just stepped into the room, dimly lighted by a lamp in a corner, where Ramlal was sitting quite near by. She was startled to notice the Master walking up and down, overwhelmed with an extraordinary spiritual feeling at that dead of night, an hour silent, calm and tranquil. She espied that grave and sublime face of the Master brightened with spiritual emotion, that God-intoxicated figure, that inward, steadfast look of those large eyes, before which the whole universe merged into and emerged from Samadhi at will, that grave majestic gait, that wholly indrawn mind and that random pacing up and down in supernal bliss. It seemed to her that the Master's body had become much bigger in both height and bulk as if he was not a mortal of this earth, but some god from heaven, come in the guise of a human being to this earthly sphere so full of misery, wailings and death; and, veiling himself with the darkness of night, that being was majestically pacing up and down the room. It seemed to her that he was in a profound concentration of mind in order to ascertain, out of compassion, the way by which he could convert this burning-ground of the dead, as this world in reality is, into a heaven fit for gods to live in. One thing seemed certain to her: he could not be the same Master whom she had known. The hairs of her body stood on end and she felt an indescribable awe as she approached him.

Ramlal had already placed a seat for the Master to sit on. With difficulty the woman devotee went and placed the cup of Halwa in front of the seat. The Master sat down to eat and gradually ate up the whole of it under the influence of that spiritual intoxication. Did the Master understand the thought of the woman devotee? Who can say? But while he was eating it, he saw her looking at him aghast and said to her, "Tell me who is eating? Is it I or someone else?"

The woman devotee: "It seems to me as if someone else is there in you and it is he who is eating."

The Master: "You are right." Saying so, he smiled.

17. Strong spiritual emotions changed the Master's body

Many such events may be mentioned. The powerful waves of spiritual emotions produced such great changes in the Master's body that on those occasions he seemed to be a different person, and his behaviour—bodily movements, eating, drinking etc.,—assumed a different nature, as it were. Yet, on account of that supra-normal behaviour, no disturbance was observable in his body at the end of those spiritual moods. That the mind residing within is making and unmaking our gross body and fashioning it anew is a fact which, though known (theoretically), is not known (practically); and though heard of, is not believed in. But these incidents, rather too common in the Master's life, are proofs thereof.

18. The meeting of Pandits, when Vaishnavacharan came to Dakshineswar

Some say that Mathur Babu knew at first of Vaishnavacharan from the Bhairavi Brahmani and resolved to send an invitation to him to come and ascertain whether there was an element of physical ailment in the Master's spiritual states. Anyway, Vaishnavacharan came to Dakshineswar shortly afterwards. We can infer that a small meeting of scholars was arranged on that occasion. For, a few devout aspirants and Pandits must have come as usual with Vaishnava charan, and the learned Brahmani and Mathur Babu's party were also there; and the subject for discussion was the Master's spiritual condition. Hence we call it a meeting.

19. A discussion about the Master's condition in that meeting

The discussion started. The Brahmani described the Master's state as she saw it with her own eyes and as she had heard about it from people around. And comparing the Master's present state with those recorded in the scriptures as experiences of the ancient teachers of the devotional path, she gave her opinion that his was the same state as theirs. Addressing Vaishnavacharan she said to him, "If you hold a different opinion about it, please explain to me why you do so." Just as a mother stands with the pride of a heroine to protect her child, the Brahmani, as if strengthened with some divine Power, came forward to support the Master's case. And the Master,

the cause of so much bustle? We can visualize the scene. Quite unconcerned and smiling and enjoying the bliss of the Self, he was sitting in the midst of the people carrying on the controversy and was sometimes putting into his mouth a few grains of aniseed or cubebs from the small bag near him, and listening to their conversation as if it was about some one else; and at other times he was touching the person of Vaishnavacharan to draw his attention to what he narrated about his own condition, saying, "Look here, it sometimes happens like this."

20. Vaishnavacharan's conclusion about the state of the Master

Some are of opinion that with the help of the subtle insight born of his Sadhana, Vaishnavacharan came to know the moment he saw him that the Master was a great soul. But that apart, we were told by the Master himself that he heard and heartily approved whatever the Brahmani said about the Master's condition. Not only that; Vaishnavacharan remarked with amazement that all the signs of the nineteen kinds of main spiritual moods, the co-existence of which has been called in the devotional scriptures as the "Mahabhava", the great mood, and observed only in the lives of Sri Radha, the embodiment of spiritual moods, and Sri Chaitanya, were seen manifested in the Master. If the indication of the "great mood" ever appeared in the life of a Jiva, thanks to the accumulation of an unprecedented good fortune, at most two or three of those nineteen kinds are seen manifested there. The body of a Jiva could not contain, in the past, the tremendous force of all of them and would, the Sastras say, never be able to do so in future. Mathur and the others present were altogether dumbfounded to hear the words of Vaishnavacharan. And the Master also said to Mathur in joy and astonishment, "Ah, what does he say! However, I am glad to know that it is not a disease."

21. The Master's opinion about the sects like the Kartabhaja (the worshippers of the spiritual teacher) and the like

The above opinion of Vaishnavacharan about the Master was not mere words, for, ever afterwards, he held the Master in high regard and had

genuine devotion to him. From that time on, he came very often to Dakshineswar for the purpose of enjoying the bliss of the Master's divine company, sought his opinion on his own secret Sadhanas, which he confided to him. Sometimes, he took him by way of a trip to his fellow devotees treading the same path, so that they also might be acquainted with the Master and be blessed like himself. Mixing with them and knowing their lives and secret Sadhanas, the god-like Master, the picture of immaculate purity, got the opportunity to understand that, if one practises as Sadhana, actions blameworthy and condemnable in ordinary eyes, cherishing in one's heart the sure conviction that one is doing it for the realization of the divine Lord, one, instead of meeting with downfall on this account, becomes gradually fit for renunciation and self-control, goes forward on the path of religion and attains devotion to God. But, when at first he heard of those practices and saw a little of them with his own eyes, there arose in his mind, we were told many a time by the Master himself, such ideas as, "These people talk tall; why do they at the same time indulge in such low practices?" And again, we were told by the Master himself that he changed his opinion at last, for he saw that those amongst them who were sincere and had faith in God made spiritual progress. In order to remove our hatred for the followers of those paths, the Master expressed to us his conviction about them thus: "Ah, why should you indulge in hatred? Know that that is also one of the paths, but a dirty one. Just as there are several doors—the main gate, the back door and the one for the sweeper to enter the house in order to clean the dirt there—leading into the house, so know that this is also a path. Through whatever door people may enter the house, they reach the goal all right. Still, are you to act like them or mix with them? No, but you must keep your heart clean of all hatred for them."

22. The kind of religion wanted by men full of worldly desires

Does the human mind full of worldly desires adopt the path of renunciation easily? Does it easily go forward to call on God with purity and sincerity, and realize Him? It wants voluntarily to cling to some impurity in purity; although it renounces lust and gold, it is pleased with whatever smells of them. The books on the method of performing worship

enjoin that one should take endless pains to worship the divine Mother in a pure way and the next moment prescribe the singing of hideous, lustful songs for Her satisfaction. This is not something to be wondered at or condemned. This only clearly shows what an adamantine chain of lust and gold the weak human mind is bound with, under the powerful influence of Mahamaya, the ruler of innumerable universes. It becomes clear that it is impossible for a Jiva to attain liberation if She does not remove this bondage by Her grace. It becomes clear that the path along which She is helping a particular person to go forward towards liberation is beyond human understanding. And when we minutely know and detect the thoughts of our minds and study the mystery of the Master's wonderful life in comparison with them, it becomes abundantly clear that he is a person above all others and beyond humanity, the like of whom was never seen before, and that out of his own accord or in play or out of compassion for us, he sojourned in this sordid world of ours for some time and lived a life like that of a king of kings in the eyes of knowledge, though, to superficial eyes it appeared humbler than the humblest and lowlier than the lowliest.

23. The history of the origin of the Tantras and their novelty

In the Karma Kanda, the "work" portion of the Veda, full of the descriptions of sacrifices, oblations etc., that were performed in the Vedic age, Bhoga, the enjoyment of the worldly objects was combined with Yoga. The contemplation on the supreme Spirit and the attainment, through worship of the gods, of the restrained enjoyment of worldly objects of sight, taste, etc., were ascertained to be the aim of human life. When the human mind became freed from desires to some extent by continued observance of those Vedic actions, it worshipped God with the pure devotion spoken of in the Upanishads and had the purpose of its life fulfilled. But in the Buddhistic age, the attempt was totally different. All the worldly people whose hearts were burning with desires of worldly enjoyments, were taught without any distinction the worship of a pure nature, suited for the desire-less dwellers of the forest. The then political machinery of the State also helped that attempt of the Buddhist monks. The Vedic sacrifices, oblations, etc., allowed the human mind treading the path of enjoyment to have

controlled worldly pleasures and thus to try to bring it gradually to the path of Yoga, of renunciation. But when they were outwardly destroyed by the preaching of the Buddhist monks, they reappeared in the forms of secret Tantric Sadhahas, practised at the dead of night in places like the burning grounds of the dead, full of terror and devoid of human beings. Seeing the Vedic sacrifices etc., becoming ineffective and obsolete,[1] the great Yogi, Maheswara, the Tantras say, infused life into them and revealed them in different forms in the Tantras. There is indeed a great truth hidden in this tradition, for, in the Tantras, as in the portions of the Vedas dealing with sacrifices etc., a union of Bhoga, worldly enjoyment, with Yoga, spiritual contemplation, is distinctly perceptible. But while these Vedic Karmas were separate from the non-dual knowledge of the Upanishads, each Tantric rite or ceremony is, it is seen, intimately associated with that supreme knowledge. For example, when you sit to worship a particular deity, first of all you are to think that you raise the Kundalini, the coiled Power, to the thousand-petalled lotus in the head and think of your existence in a non-dual state with Brahman. Then you are to think that you become separate from Him and assume the nature of a Jiva again, and that the light of Brahman becomes condensed, so to say, and manifests itself in the form of the deity to be worshipped. You bring the deity out from within you and begin to worship him. Ah, what a fine method is this attempt at meditation, becoming one with God in love, which is the true aim of human life! Of course, it is perhaps only one advanced worshipper among a thousand, who can properly perform this action; but all make at least an attempt, more or less, to do so, which is of immense benefit to them for, it is by continually doing so that they will gradually advance. Mixed thus with every Tantric action, the idea of non-dual knowledge reminds the aspirant of his ultimate aim. Herein lies the novelty of the Tantric disciplines, as distinguished from the Vedic rituals; and it is for this reason that it has such a great hold over the people of India in general.

24. The history of the “heroic mode” of worship entering into the Tantra

Another novelty of the Tantras is the preaching of the Motherhood of Mahamaya, the Cause of the universe, as a result of which a pure, sacred

mental attitude towards every feminine form is induced. Examine, scan the Vedas and Puranas, you will not meet with this idea anywhere in them. It is a peculiarity of the Tantras. The rudiments of the worship of the female body are met with in the Samhita portion of the Vedas. They especially prescribed that it should be looked upon as pure and that at the time of marriage gods should be worshipped in it by the Mantras such as "Conceive, O One (Uma) possessing the white crescent of the moon", so that the bride might conceive a beautiful child, full of vitality. But, let no one think on this account that the worship of the male and female bodies was prevalent in India from the Vedic times. History has proved that this worship in a gross form was at first extant among the Sumers of Babylon and the cognate Dravidians. Just as, on the one hand, the Tantra of India united in each of its ceremonies the spirit of the "work" and "knowledge" portions of the Vedas, so, on the other hand, knowing that the spiritual progress of a certain class of people with peculiar tendencies would be easy through the worship of the female form, it reverted to a great extent to a gross form of the worship of that female body and, uniting with it the high spiritual ideal of the above-mentioned worship of the Vedic period, developed it fully. The Tantra thus made that worship also a part of itself. The Tantric Virachara, the hero-mode of worship, seems to have originated in this way. The Kula teachers, the authors of the Tantras, rightly understood that men, ever eager to enjoy pleasures, could not forgo the gross sights, tastes, etc., altogether, but, if they could somehow generate in those persons a genuine reverence for the objects of enjoyment, they were certain to develop, on the strength of that reverence, spiritual qualities like self-control etc., in course of time, though they might indulge for some time in the pleasures thereof—may be to some excess in rare cases. That was why they preached: The bodies of women are veritable holy places of pilgrimage; one should give up looking upon women as human beings and always regard them as the Devi Herself. Knowing that it is a special manifestation of the Mother of the universe, one should always have devotion to, and reverence for, every female figure. One should sip a little of the water in which she has dipped her toe. One should not condemn a woman or beat her even through inadvertence. We read:

‘In her (a woman’s body), O great Lady, there exist all the places of pilgrimage.’

— Ch. 14, *Purascharanollasa Tantra*

‘A man who looks upon woman as a human being, O Thou of the best countenance, can have no perfection though he may repeat Mantras; he meets with the contrary result.’

—Ch. 2, *Uttara Tantra*

‘A man who drinks with devotion a little of the water into which a woman has dipped her toe or eats the leavings of the food in her plate, is sure to have uninterrupted success.’

—*Nigama-kalpadruma*

‘Women are the gods, they are sacred and they are the ornaments of society. One should never hate, condemn or beat them.’ —Ch. 5, *Mundamala Tantra*

25. There are in each Tantra two strata, the high and the low

But of what avail were all these? Eventually there came a time for the Tantric Sadhakas when they gave up the ideal of realizing the knowledge of God and applied their minds to the attainment of miraculous powers. It was during this period that various kinds of unnatural Sadhanas and the worship of ghosts, ghouls, etc., entered into the body of the Tantra and converted it into its present form. This is why two broad strata, the good and the bad, the high and the low, are met with in each Tantra. Sadhanas of the lowest stratum are seen inserted into the worship of the highest. And every one now selects from the Tantras that kind of Sadhana which suits his own nature.

26. The new process of worship founded by the Vaishnava community of Bengal

There appeared another change in the Tantric Sadhana on the advent of Sri Chaitanya. Thinking that the spread of dualism among the masses would be beneficial, he and the Vaishnava teachers after him propagated among

them the Tantric Mantras and outward worship only, leaving out, to a great extent, the Tantric practices leading to the attitude of non-duality. They also introduced a novel method into the above worship. They taught that the deity, the object of worship, should be served by one as one wished oneself to be served. The Tantric deities purify by mere sight the fruits, roots and other food offered to them by the worshippers. The general belief is that these offered articles, taken by the aspirants, increase their spiritual inclination instead of their animal propensities of lust, anger, etc. According to the process newly started by the Vaishnava teachers, on the other hand, the belief gained currency that the deities took subtle parts of those offerings, and sometimes they took even gross parts in accordance with the ardour or importunate eagerness of the devotee. Many other changes were also introduced by the Vaishnava teachers into the process of their worship. Chief amongst them seems to be that they established, as far as possible, the pre-eminence of the Tantric mode of worship, called "Paswachara"[1] and favoured external cleanliness. They preached to the people in general that by remaining absolutely clean in thought, word and deed, and knowing that the name itself was Brahman, Jivas would attain the beatific vision, through the constant repetition of the name of the divine Lord according to the precept, "Success is achieved through Japa, Japa and Japa alone!"

27. From this Sadhana originated eventually the doctrines of Kartabhaja etc. The essence of all those doctrines

But their effort was all in vain. Very shortly after they had passed away, the human mind, full of desires, introduced impure ideas into the pure process of worship founded by them. Man discarded the subtle ideas, and took only the gross objects. Instead of cultivating the heart-felt attraction which a woman has for her paramour, and directing it towards God, he went the length of taking a mistress himself. Thus he introduced Bhoga, worldly enjoyment, into the pure process of Yoga, union with God, and brought it down to the level of his natural inclination to a certain extent. And what else can he do? For, he is unable to live such a pure life. It is only a combination of Yoga and Bhoga, that he can assimilate. He wants to realize spirituality, but simultaneously covets a little of the enjoyments of sight, taste, etc. And

this was why there arose, in the Vaishnava community, worship and secret Sadhana according to the doctrines of the Kartabhajas, Auls, Bauls, Darvesas, Sains, and so on. Therefore, at the root of all these is seen the current of the very ancient Vedic Karmas, that combination of Yoga and Bhoga. Along with it a tendency to combine each action with the non-dual knowledge, a process founded by the Tantric Kula teachers is also seen.

28. The method of the teaching of Sadhya (the object of realization) and Sadhana (the means of realization) according to the Kartabhaja and other doctrines

The reader will easily understand what we said above, if we mention here the ideas of the Kartabhaja and similar other communities regarding God, liberation, self-control, renunciation, love, etc. Speaking of these communities, the Master told us many things at different times. They are recorded in verses in a simple language. The reader will realize, when he hears them, how far those verses help the ordinary people in understanding the ideas conveyed by those terms. The people of these communities call God "Aleklata". It is superfluous to say that the word "Alek" is derived from the Sanskrit word "Alakshya" the unknown and unknowable. This Alek enters into the mind of pure man, in other words, It manifests Itself through it as Karta, the spiritual teacher. On such a teacher they bestow the title of Sahaj, the man whose natural tendencies lead Godward. The community is called Kartabhaja, worshipper of the spiritual Teacher, because it is only a human being, truly inspired by the mood of the spiritual teacher, that is regarded by them as the object of worship. About the real nature of Aleklata, and Its influence on a pure heart, they say:

"It comes imperceptibly and goes imperceptibly.
Nobody can see the Alek.
One, who has known It,
Is the object of worship in the three worlds."

The sign of a Sahaj man is that he always remains "intact"; in other words, he does not lose his serenity on account of lust even if he be always in the company of women. They say about him:

"He lives with women but never indulges in sexual satisfaction."

If an aspirant does not live unattached in the world of lust and gold he cannot advance spiritually. They, therefore, teach him,

> "Be a cook, and distribute the curry but do not touch the cooking-pot.
> Make the frog dance in the mouth of the snake, but let not the snake swallow it.
> Bathe in the sea of ambrosia but do not let your hair be wet."

Just as in the Tantra the Sadhakas have been divided into three classes, the "animal", the "heroic" and the "divine", so there are high and low classes of Sadhakas amongst the Kartabhajas. They speak of four classes, the Auls, Bauls, Darvesas and Sains, and they say that there is none higher than a Sain. The Master said, "All of them worship the formless aspect of God." He used also to sing often a few songs of this community for us. Take, for example, the song:

> "Dive, O my mind, dive into the sea of Beauty.
> You will realize the treasure, the gem of love, when you will make a search in the deepest world of your heart.
> Search, search over and over again, and you will realize Vrindavan in your heart.
> The lamp of knowledge will constantly burn, brightly illumining your heart.
> Who is he, who conducts the boat so easily on land?
> Kuvir says, 'Listen attentively; meditate on the holy feet of the Guru'."

Thus to worship the Guru and remain engaged in congregational devotional exercises are their chief Sadhanas. Although they do not disapprove the worship of the image, forms, etc., of deities, they generally do not worship them. The worship of the Guru in India is very ancient; it seems to have been prevalent from the age of the Upanishads. For, we read in the Upanishads, "Let the Acharya be your God."[1] It appears that the worship of deities was not at all in vogue at that time. One is astonished to see how many forms that worship of the Guru assumed in India, in course of time.

Besides, the aspirants have to undergo various religious exercises in order to renounce from their minds the consciousness of difference such as "clean and unclean", "good and bad", and so on. The Master said, "The aspirants

receive instructions regarding those exercises coming down from Guru to disciple." He would now and again mention a little of those also.

29. Vaishnavacharan took the Master to a private meeting of the Kachhibagan group to test him

The Master was ever and again heard to say, "The Vedas and the Puranas should be heard by the ear; but the disciplines prescribed by the Tantras should be actually performed and carried into practice." It is seen too almost everywhere in India, that the followers of the Smritis practise one or other of the Tantric disciplines. Big scholars of the Nyaya and the Vedanta are, it is observed, Tantric in practice. Learned scholars of the Vaishnava communities, well versed in devotional scriptures like the *Bhagavata,* are also seen to follow the secret Sadhanas of the communities like the Kartabhajas. Pandit Vaishnavacharan was one of them. He was intimately connected with their secret congregation at Kachhibagan, a few miles north of Calcutta. Many men and women of the said community lived there and were engaged in Sadhana under his instruction. Vaishnavacharan took the Master there on a few occasions. Noticing that the Master was always perfectly unaffected by lust and seeing that on account of the love of God, he entered into ecstasy, which they had never seen before, a few women of that place tried, we were told, to test him in order to know whether he had completely conquered his passions. As a result, they paid him the respect due to one who was "intact", and naturally disposed towards God. The ingenuous Master, of course, had gone on a trip there with Vaishnavacharan at his request without suspecting anything. He did not know at all that they would test him that way. Be that as it may, he never went there again, afterwards.

30. Vaishnavacharan knew the Master to be an incarnation of God

When Vaishnavacharan saw the wonderful strength of the Master's character, his purity and ecstasy, his devotion to and reverence for him increased so much, day by day, that he never hesitated at last to admit, in the presence of all, that the Master was an incarnation of God.

31. The miraculous power of Pandit Gauri, the follower of the Tantras

Scarcely had Vaishnavacharan paid a few visits to the Master in a short time, when Pandit Gauri of Indes came to Dakshineswar. He was an eminent Tantric Sadhaka. As soon as he reached the Dakshineswar temple, an amusing event happened in connection with him. We heard of it from the Master. He said that Gauri had a miraculous power acquired through his austerities. Whenever he was invited to a scriptural controversy, he used to utter loudly a few times the line, "Whom else shall I, helpless one, have for a refuge, but Thee, O Mother of the pot-bellied Ganesh," preceded by the syllables "ha, re, re, re," evoking heroic sentiment, before entering the house and the place of the meeting. The Master said, "The hearts of all were startled with an indescribable fright when they heard from his mouth those syllables, expressive of the heroic mood, and that quarter of a stanza from the hymn to the Devi by the Acharya Sankara uttered in a voice deep and sonorous like the rumbling of a cloud. Two results were achieved by this. Firstly, by virtue of that sound, the power in Gauri became fully awakened; and, secondly, he stole away the strength of the adversaries by startling and charming them with it. Loudly uttering that sound and slapping his left arm, like wrestlers, with the palm of his right, Gauri entered the meeting and sat down with his legs folded and his knees joined together in front and the feet behind, in the fashion of the courtiers of the emperors of Delhi, and engaged himself in the controversy." The Master said that it was then impossible for anyone to defeat Gauri.

The Master had not known of that power of Gauri. But, as soon as he entered the Dakshineswar Kali temple and uttered loudly the syllables "ha, re, re, re," some one, as it were, within the Master, pushed him up and made him utter those words more loudly than Gauri. Hearing those syllables from the mouth of the Master, Gauri uttered them still more loudly. Excited at that, the Master uttered "ha, re, re, re", far mors loudly than he. The Master used to say smilingly that a terrible noise arose, like the din made during inroads by dacoits, on account of the louder and yet louder utterances of those syllables on both sides. With sticks, cudgels etc., the gate-keepers of the Kali temple ran from wherever they were, hurriedly, towards the place of the noise. All others were beside themselves with fear. That apart, Gauri

could not at last utter those words more loudly than the Master and was silenced and, as if in a somewhat dejected mood, slowly entered the Kali temple. On knowing that the Master and the newly arrived Pandit were raising all that din, all went away roaring with laughter. The Master said, "The divine Mother afterwards told me that the power with which Gauri stole away the powers of others, himself remaining unconquerable, was exposed here and lost to him for ever. Mother attracted that power 'here' (into the Master) for his good." And it was seen that, day by day, Gauri was actually charmed by the ideal of the Master and became completely obedient to him.

32. Gauri worshipped his wife as the Devi

Pandit Gauri was, we have already said, a Tantric Sadhaka. At the time of the worship of Durga every year, Gauri, we were told by the Master, made all the preparations for the worship of the Mother of the universe, adorned his wife with dress and ornaments, seated her on a wooden seat decorated with Alimpana and, for three days, devoutly worshipped her as the divine Mother Herself. The Tantra teaches that all the female figures are the forms of the Mother of the universe and that there is a great manifestation in them of the divine Mother's power of maintaining and gladdening the Jivas. Man, therefore, should worship in a pure manner all female figures without exception. Forgetting that the divine Mother Herself stands veiled in female figures, and looking upon female bodies with a feeling of lust, as if they were objects of enjoyment only, one insults the Mother of the universe Herself and consequently meets with endless ruin. In the *Chandi* (11.6.) the gods recite the hymn to the Devi:

"Vidyah samastastava Devi bhedah,
Striyah samastah sakala jagatsu.
Twayaikaya puritamambayaitat,
Ka te stutih stavya paraparoktih."

"O Devi, Thou art of the nature of pure Consciousness. Again Thou art manifested as all the various sciences, high and low, from which endless kinds of conceptual knowledge arise. Thou existest as all the female figures of the world. Thou alone pervadest the whole universe and art present

everywhere in it. Thou art incomparable and beyond words; who has ever been or will be able to describe Thy numberless noble qualities by reciting a hymn to Thee?"

Many of us read this hymn daily in India; but, alas, how few of us, try to look upon the female figure as the Devi Herself, pay it the due respect even for a few moments and thus feel pure joy in our hearts and feel blessed? How few are those who do not look with a vile mind and an impure eye upon female figures, the vehicles of the divine Mother's especial manifestation, and do not insult the Mother of the universe, hundreds of times every day? O, India, you are in this present miserable condition only because you insult female forms with your bestial attitude and have forgotten to serve Jiva as Siva. The Mother of the universe alone knows when She will have compassion on you and remove that bestial mood of yours.

33. Gauri's strange process of offering oblations

We have heard from the Master himself of another wonderful power of Pandit Gauri. The eminent Tantric Sadhakas perform Homa at the end of the daily worship of the universal Mother. Gauri also performed it on many occasions, if not daily. But the process of his Homa was very strange. He did not perform it like others who make an altar on the ground by means of lumps of earth or sand, arrange pieces of wood on it, and then kindle fire and offer oblations. He stretched his own left arm in the air and placed on it one Maund (about 82 lbs.) of wood at a time, lighted it and offered oblations into it with his right hand. It is not a little time that Homa takes. So, it appears to us to be quite impossible for one to sustain the heavy weight of one Maund of wood on the arm stretched in the air and keep the mind calm and devoutly offer oblations in the prescribed way for so long a time, bearing the heat of the fire on the arm all the while. That is why many of us could not at first believe in the feat, even when we heard of it from the Master himself. The Master understood it and said, "Ah! I saw him do it with my own eyes; that was also one of his miraculous powers."

34. A meeting including Vaishnavacharan and Gauri was convened at Dakshineswar. The Master in Bhavasamadhi rode on the shoulders of Vaishnavacharan who composed a hymn in praise of him

Mathur Babu invited a few scholarly aspirants like Vaishnavacharan and convened a meeting a few days after Gauri had come to Dakshineswar. The purpose of the meeting was a discussion between the newly arrived Pandit Gauri and other scholars on scriptural evidence in order to ascertain as before, the spiritual condition of the Master. It was convened in the morning in the music hall in front the temple of the Mother Kali. Seeing that Vaishnavacharan was late in coming from Calcutta, the Master started for the place of the meeting with Gauri. Before entering the meeting, he went into the temple of the divine Mother Kali, saluted Her with devotion and worshipped Her feet. As soon as he came out of the temple staggering in Bhavasamadhi, he saw Vaishnavacharan fall at his feet and salute him. No sooner had the Master, inspired by spiritual emotion and love of God, seen him than he went into Samadhi and sat on Vaishnavacharan's shoulders. The latter felt blessed and was beside himself with joy. He composed extempore and recited a hymn to the Master in Sanskrit. Seeing that gracious and bright form of the Master in Samadhi, and hearing that graceful recital of the hymn by Vaishnavacharan with his heart over-flowing with joy, Mathur and the others present were standing motionless on all sides with their eyes steadfast and hearts filled with devotion. The Master's Samadhi came to an end shortly afterwards, when all went along slowly with him and sat down in the place of the meeting.

Now began the proceedings of the meeting. But, Gauri, first of all said suddenly, "As he (the Master) has bestowed so much grace on the Pandit, I will not enter into a discussion with him today. Even if I did, I am sure to be defeated, for he is armed with divine grace today. Moreover, I find he is a person holding the same opinion as I do; his conviction about the Master is the same as mine. A discussion is, therefore, useless in this case." The meeting came to an end after a little scriptural conversation on other topics.

It was not a fact that Gauri was afraid of the scholarship of Vaishnavacharan and so refrained from a controversy with him. Seeing the way of life of the Master and his characteristics, he, with the help of his

keen insight produced by his Tapas, felt in his heart of hearts, even in that short period of his stay there, that the Master was not an ordinary man but a great soul. For, some time afterwards, the Master said to him with a view to testing his mind, “Look here, Vaishnavacharan calls this (himself) an incarnation of God; can that be so? Please tell me what you think.”

35. The conviction of Gauri about the Master

Gauri replied seriously, “Does Vaishnavacharan call you an incarnation? I should consider his estimate very low. My conviction is that you are He, from whose parts incarnations come down to the world from age to age to do good to humanity and with whose power they accomplish that work of theirs.” The Master said with a smile, “Ah, you go even beyond him! Will you tell me what you see in me?” Gauri said, “I say so on the evidence of the scriptures and from my own experience. If anyone takes up the opposite view and controverts me, I am ready to prove my conviction.”

The Master said like a boy, “You say so many things; who knows what it is? I don’t know anything at all.”

Gauri replied, “Quite right. The scriptures also say, ‘Thou dost not know Thyself.’ So, please say how others can know you. If you have compassion on any body and let him know the truth, then he can know it.”

36. Detachment came on Gauri in the company of the Master; he renounced the world and went away to practise Tapas

The Master smiled on hearing the words of faith of the Pandit. Gauri’s attraction for the Master grew with days. In the Master’s divine company, the Pandit’s knowledge of the scriptures and the result of his Sadhana were drawing towards completion and were manifested as intense detachment from the world. He was daily losing his relish for scholarship, honour, miraculous powers, etc., and his mind was withdrawing itself to the lotus feet of God. Gauri had now no more that pride of scholarship, that love for argumentation, that arrogance—all vanished altogether. He now understood that he had spent his precious time so long in vain without making the utmost efforts to realize the lotus feet of the divine Lord. Time should no

more be wasted that way. He formed the firm resolve in his mind that he should renounce his all and depending entirely on God with a heart full of devotion, should spend the few days of his life in eagerly calling on Him, so that he might have His grace and vision.

Gauri thus spent day after day and month after month in the blessed company of the Master and in the meditation of God. As he was for a long time away from home, the members of the Pandit's family—his wife, son and others—wrote letters to him again and again. For, they had some inkling from people that he mixed with a certain holy mad man at Dakshineswar and that his mind was becoming indifferent to the world.

The thought that they might come to Dakshineswar and drag him into the worldly life again, gradually grew strong in the mind of the Pandit. This was evident from the trend of the letters he received from them. After a great deal of anxious thought, Gauri discovered a way out. Knowing that an auspicious moment had arrived, he bowed down at the holy feet of the Master and asked leave of him with tears in his eyes. The Master said, "What is that, Gauri? Why do you want to leave suddenly? Where will you go?"

Gauri replied with folded hands, "Bless me, so that I may have my desire fulfilled. I'll not return before I realize God." Since then the world has never heard of Pandit Gauri, in spite of a great deal of search.

37. While giving instruction, the Master would quote Vaishnavacharan and Gauri: faith in the Lila of God as a human being

The Master mentioned to us, many a time, various incidents from the lives of Vaishnavacharan and Gauri. Again, sometimes in the course of discussing some topic, he would tell us what opinion they had expressed on it. One day while he was giving instruction to a devout aspirant, the Master, we remember, said to him, "When one actually sees his chosen Ideal in man, one realizes the divine Lord. Vaishnavacharan used to say, 'When one has faith in the Lila of God as man, one acquires perfect knowledge'."

38. Gauri on the knowledge of non-difference between Kali and Krishna

Noticing in one of the devotees the pernicious idea of discrimination between Kali and Krishna, the Master once said to him, “What is this mean idea? Know that it is your chosen Ideal that has become Kali, Krishna, Gaur and all others. But, do I ask you, on that account, to give up your own chosen Ideal and worship Gaur? No, not that. But give up the attitude of hatred. Hold on firmly to the belief that your chosen Ideal has become Krishna, Gaur and so on. Don’t you see that a daughter-in-law of a household goes to her father-in-law’s house, serves and pays respect to every one—father-in-law, mother-in-law, the husband’s sisters, his younger and elder brothers and others, according to her relationship with them; but she shares her bed and thoughts with her husband alone. She knows that it is through the husband that all others of the household are her own. So it is with your chosen Ideal. And know further that it is on account of your relation with the chosen Ideal alone that you are related with the other forms of His, and you should have devotion to and reverence for them. Know this and drive away hatred. Gauri used to say, ‘When Kali and Gauranga are known as the same, I shall know that true knowledge has come’.”

39. Vaishnavacharan on regarding the object of one’s love as a form of the divine Lord

Again, observing that the mind of some devotee could not become calm on account of a great attachment to some one in the family, the Master advised him to serve and love that object of his love as a form of the divine Lord. We told the reader before[1] how he advised a woman devotee who was very much attached to a young nephew of hers, to serve and love that child as the boy Krishna, and how, as the result of that practice, she attained Bhavasamadhi in a short time. While he was teaching that one should have reverence for and devotion to the object of one’s love, as God, the Master sometimes quoted Vaishnavacharan on that subject and said, “Vaishnavacharan used to say that if any one could look upon the object of his love as his chosen Ideal, his mind would soon turn to the divine Lord.” Saying so, he would forthwith explain it: “He used to advise the women of his own community to do so. It was therefore not blameworthy; for, have

they not got the mental attitude of a paramour? They wanted to attribute to themselves that attraction for God which a woman feels in her mind for her paramour." The Master, however, said that it was not a thing to be taught to the general public, for, he said, "It would increase adultery." But he did not disapprove of one's loving and serving one's husband, son or some other relation as a form of God. He, it is known to us, taught many of the devotees who took refuge at his lotus feet to do so.

40. This instruction accords with the scriptures. The conversation in the Upanishad between Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi

On a little thought, it becomes clear that this is not a novel, unscriptural doctrine. The Rishi, the author of the Upanishad,[1] teaches in the conversation between Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi, "The husband becomes dear to the wife only because the divine Lord is in the husband. The mind of the husband is attracted towards the wife only because He is in the wife." The Rishis of India, the authors of the Upanishads, have been thus teaching us, for ages, to look upon all those things and persons of the world—the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, wealth, etc., that give rise in us to the idea of their being something precious, and attract our minds towards them, as part of the divine Lord, who is of the nature of Love and Bliss, and to love them accordingly. When Narada, the divine Rishi and author of the aphorisms on devotion, and other teachers of devotion teach Jivas to turn the deadly enemies of man, the passions of lust, anger, etc., towards God and ask them to have recourse to the devotional attitude of a friend, a mother, or a sweet-heart towards the Lord, they but follow in the footsteps of the more ancient Rishis, the authors of the Upanishads. The Master's opinion, therefore, on this matter is clearly scriptural.

41. The incarnations of God always abide by the authority of the Sastras. The teaching of the Master about paying respects to all religions

It is needless to explain in so many words that the great souls who are the incarnations of God bring to the religious world the gospel of a new path, quite in keeping with the authority of the ancient scriptures and in no way

contrary to their doctrines. This can be understood by studying the life of any one of the incarnations of God. It has all along been our endeavour in this book to explain to the reader this fact in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, the prophet of the modern age. We meet, at every turn, with the same reverential attitude towards the scriptures. But, if we fail to do so, let the reader know that it is due to the defects of our narrow intellect, and not to any shortcoming of the Master, whose discovery of the new great spiritual truth "As many faiths, so many paths" has charmed the world. Not only the Vedantic non-dualism etc., but all those doctrines which we call the vile Kartabhaja etc., and at which we turn up our nose in imitation of the clever worldly West—who use one standard to judge the actions of other individuals and nations and, cleverly setting it aside, adopt another to examine their own methods and actions—all were accorded by the Master, the god-man, a respectable position as genuine paths to the realization of the divine Lord and prescribed for persons according to their particular inclinations and capabilities. Urged by hatred, many of us asked the Master on many occasions, "Sir, how is it that such a high-class aspirant as the Brahmani used to practise Sadhana with the five M's[1]?" Or we used to put the question, "Is it not wrong that a devotee of such a high calibre as the learned Vaishnavacharan did not refrain from taking a paramour as auxiliary to his Sadhana?"

The Master replied over and over again, "Oh, no, they did not incur any blame by it! They believed whole-heartedly that it was a path to the realization of God. One should not condemn any method practised by a person who genuinely believes in his heart of hearts that it will enable him to realize God. The spiritual attitude of no one should be interfered with. For, if one rightly grasps any attitude, through it alone one can realize the divine Lord, who is the embodiment of all attitudes. Stick to your own attitude and continue calling on Him. But never condemn anybody's attitude nor try to make another's attitude your own." Saying so, the ever-blissful Master would begin forthwith to sing now and again:

> "Remain, O mind, in yourself, do not go to any one else's place.
> If you make a search in your heart, you will get without any effort whatever you want.

That philosopher’s stone, the supreme treasure, can give whatever you ask for!
How many are the gems lying scattered at the backdoor of that Supreme Being!
Do not, O mind, become restless to take painful journeys to places of pilgrimage.
Why don’t you joyfully bathe and cool yourself in the confluence of the three streams [1] at the basic centre [2]?
What do you behold, O Kamalakanta[3]? All is un real magic in the world.
You do not recognize the magician who dwells in this body.”

Footnote

1. III. 1. 33.

1. That is, the four months of Ashar, Sravan, Bhadra and Aswin.

1. Due to incapacity of the priests and sacrificers.—Tr.

1. Paswachara=Pasu+Achara. Pasu ordinarily means an animal, but in the Tantra it means Jiva; hence Paswachara is not anything censurable. It simply means the rites and ceremonies of those who still consider themselves as Jivas and have not attained oneness with Siva, who is Pasupati, the Lord of Jivas. As long as a man regards himself a Jiva, he must keep an eye to cleanliness, purity of food, etc. Hence in Paswachara, stress is laid on these things.—Tr.

1. *Taittiriya Upanishad,* I. 11. 2.

1. III. 1. 27.

1. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 2.* 5.

1. The five essentials of certain Tantric rites, viz., fish, flesh, wine, fried rice etc. All these are denoted in Sanskrit by words beginning with M. So, they are called M's.—Tr.

1. Three streams: Ida, Pingala and Sushumna.

2. Basic centre: Muladhara Chakra.

3. The composer of the song.—Tr.

CHAPTER II
THE MOOD OF THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER AND VARIOUS COMMUNITIES OF HOLY MEN

> I am the origin of all, everything evolves out of Me. Knowing thus the wise worship Me with profound attention to the supreme Truth. — Gita X. 8
>
> Out of compassion for them, I, abiding in a particular modification of their minds, destroy the darkness of delusion produced by ignorance, by means of the luminous lamp of knowledge. —Gita X. 11

1. How the Master met holy men

Once the Master said to us, "Young Bengal,[1] like you, started coming after Kesav Sen himself had been visiting this place for some time. Do you know how many Sadhus, the world-renouncing Sannyasins and Vairagis used to come here formerly? Since the construction of Railways, they do not come this way. But, before that, all holy men used to come by the road along the side of the Ganga to bathe in the confluence of the Ganga and the sea and pay their obeisance to Sri Jagannath at Puri. All of them, invariably came and rested for a couple of days at Rasmani's garden. Some of them, again, stayed much longer. Do you know why? Sadhus do not stay at a place where Bhiksha[2] (food by begging) and secluded places for answering nature's calls are not easily available. They maintain their bodies by Bhiksha only. That is why they fix their seats where Bhiksha is easily available.

2. Holy men rest where they find it convenient to get water and secluded places for answering calls of nature

Again, during their journeys, when these holy men get tired, they halt for a day or two at a place in spite of the difficulty of getting Bhiksha there; but they never stay where there is scarcity of water or difficulty of getting secluded places for answering calls of nature. Good Sadhus do not perform these natural actions where all people do or where they may be seen by others; they go to secluded places far away for that purpose. Just hear a story told by Sadhus:

3. A story about it

"A certain person was out in search of a holy man of true renunciation. He was told, 'Know him to be a man of true renunciation whom you see performing the 'natural functions' at places far away from human habitation.' Remembering that, the person was on the look-out for a Sadhu of that type in places considerably away from inhabited localities. One day he saw a Sadhu go farther than others for that purpose and followed him at a distance. Now, the daughter of the king of that country was told that a girl could have a good son if she could marry a true Yogi, for the scriptures say that Sadhus are born of Yogis. The daughter of the king came in search of a bridegroom after her heart to the place where Sadhus were staying. She chose that Sadhu, returned home and told her father that she wanted to marry him. The king loved his daughter dearly and, as the girl persisted, he came to the holy man and tried to prevail upon him to marry his daughter, saying that half his kingdom would go with his dear daughter, and so on and so forth. But, the Sadhu was firm and could not be seduced. He left the place at night without anybody's knowledge. The person who was watching this Sadhu saw his wonderful renunciation and realized that he had come across a holy man who was indeed a knower of Brahman. He then took refuge in him, and the Sadhu took pity on him and instructed him. Through his grace he attained genuine devotion to the Lord and had the aim of his life fulfilled."

4. Sadhus came to the Dakshineswar Kali temple because Bhiksha and secluded places were easily available there

"It was convenient to have Bhiksha at Rasmani's garden and there was no scarcity of water by the grace of the mother Ganga. Again, there were good secluded places to their liking in the neighbourhood. Sadhus, therefore, used to stay here in those days. Again, word travelled from mouth to mouth —one Sadhu spoke of the place to another and, meeting a third, coming in this direction, the second told him of it—and Rasmani's garden became well known to the Sadhus as a good place of rest for them on the way to Gangasagar and Puri."

5. Sadhus of different types came at different times

"At particular times", said the Master, "particular kinds of Sadhus gathered here in large numbers. At one time, the Sannyasins, the Paramahamsas — not the herd of vagabonds roaming about for the sake of bread —began to pour in. Large numbers of those good people were to be found in the room (his own room) day and night. And day and night were passed in the discussion of the Vedantic topics, such as the nature of Brahman and of Maya, and on 'Being, Revealing, Endearing'[1] *(astibhati, priyam)*."

6. The Vedantic discussion of the Paramahamsas: "Existence-Knowledge-Bliss"

When the Master used the words, "asti, bhati, priyam", he would forthwith explain them thus, "Do you know, what they imply? It is the true nature of Brahman. It is thus explained in the Vedanta: That which is being, in other words, which really exists, is revealing, that is, manifesting Itself. Now, manifestation partakes of the nature of knowledge. The thing of which we have knowledge has manifested itself to us; and that, of which we have no knowledge, is unmanifested to us. Is it not so? That is why the Vedanta says that whenever we are conscious of the "existence" of anything, we become simultaneously conscious of it as revealed or manifested to us; that

is, we become conscious of its nature as knowledge. And forthwith we are conscious of it as something dear, that is, the Bliss Itself residing in that thing gives rise in us to the idea that it is dear and attracts us to love it. Thus, whenever we have the consciousness of Existence, we have that of Knowledge Itself and Bliss Itself. Therefore, what is Existence is Knowledge and Bliss, what is Knowledge is Existence and Bliss and what is Bliss is Existence and Knowledge. For, the very nature of the substance, Brahman, from which the universe and all things and persons in it have sprung, is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss; in other words, It exists, is manifested and is dear. Therefore, when one acquires right knowledge, one feels, the *Uttara Gita* says, that the supreme Self exists in the place, person or thing to which your mind is attracted:

Yatra yatra mano yati,
Tatra tatra parampadam.

Man's mind, it is said in the Vedas also, runs towards sights and tastes because His parts are there in them.

"Hot discussions among them went on over these topics. I was then intensely suffering from dysentery and was having very frequent motions. Hridu placed an earthen pan in a corner of the room. I was suffering from such acute dysentery and at the same time listening to their discussions about the Vedantic knowledge. Mother raised from within and indicated simple solutions of those knotty problems on which they were unable to come to any conclusions. I told them of those solutions and their differences were removed forthwith.

7. The high state of a certain Sadhu who realized the Bliss Itself

"Once there came a Sadhu here. There was a beautiful glow on his face. He used to sit and smile only. He came out of his room once in the morning and once in the evening, gazed on everything—the trees, the plants, the sky, the Ganga and so on—and, beside himself with joy, danced with both his arms raised. He sometimes rolled with laughter and said, 'Fine! How wonderful is Maya! What an illusion has been created!' That is, what a beautiful Maya God has conjured up. That was his worship. He had the realization of Bliss.

8. The Master saw a Sadhu inebriated with divine knowledge

"There came a Sadhu on another occasion. He was inebriated with divine Knowledge. He looked like a ghoul; he was nude, with dust all over his body and head, having long nails and long hair; on the upper part of his body there was a wrapper of shreds as if picked from where dead bodies are burnt. Standing before the Kali temple and looking at the image, he recited a hymn in such a way that it made the whole temple shake, as it were, and Mother looked pleased and smiling. He then went where the poor people, sat and took food. But, seeing that ghost-like figure of his, even they did not allow him to sit near them, and drove him away. I then saw him sharing with dogs the leavings in the leaf-plates thrown in a dirty corner. He placed one arm on the shoulder of a dog and he and the dog were eating from the same leaf. The dog did not bark nor did it try to flee, though a stranger threw his arm around its neck. I was afraid to see him, lest I should get into that state and have to live and roam like him.

9. The water of the Ganga and that in a drain appear as same when Brahman is realised. People see a Paramahamsa as a child, a ghoul or a mad man

"Having seen it, I came and said to Hridu, 'His is not an ordinary madness; it is the madness of supreme God-consciousness.' When Hridu was told so, he ran to see him and found that he was going out of the garden. He followed him to a great distance and said, 'Holy sir, please give me some instruction as to how I may realize God.' At first the Sadhu did not reply. But when Hridu, showing no sign of desisting, followed him, he said, showing Hridu the water in the drain by the road, 'You will realize God when the water here and that of the yonder Ganga will appear the same, as equally pure.' He said this much and no more. Hridu tried to hear a little more and said, 'Sir, please make me your disciple and take me with you.' He said nothing in reply. Having gone far, he looked back and saw Hridu still following him; looking angry, he picked up a brickbat and threatened to throw it at him. No sooner had Hridu fled, than he threw down the brickbat, left the road and slipped away. He could not be seen any more. Such Sadhus wander in that kind of guise lest people should annoy them. This Sadhu was

in the state of a true Paramahamsa: the Sastras say, they live in the world like boys, ghouls or mad people. This is why Paramahamsas allow a band of boys to follow and play with and around them, and learn to be like them. They try to be detached from everything like boys who have no attachment for anything. Have you not seen how happy a boy feels when his mother dresses him with a piece of new cloth? If you say, 'Will you please give me this cloth?' he will immediately reply, 'No, I will not; mummy has given it to me.' Saying so, he will perhaps tighten his grip over it with all his force and with fearful eyes look at you, lest you should snatch it away, as if the whole of his heart then lay in that piece of cloth. But, seeing immediately afterwards a toy worth half a penny in your hand, he will perhaps say, 'Give me that, I will give you the cloth.' A little later, perhaps, he will throw the toy away and run to have a flower. He is as little attached to the toy as to the cloth. That is the case with the knowers of Brahman.

10. The holy men of Ramawat denomination came to Dakshineswar

"Some time passed that way. Visits of Paramahamsas became few and far between. Ramawat "fathers"[1]—men of fervent renunciation, devout and dispassionate "fathers"—began to pour in, in large numbers. Ah, what devotion and what faith they had and how steadfast was their service to the Lord! It was from one of them that Ramlala [2] came to me. That is a long story.

11. The story of the image Ramlala

"That 'father' served the image for a long time. He took it with him wherever he went. He cooked whatever he got by Bhiksha and offered the cooked food to it. That was not all; he actually saw that Ramlala ate or wished to eat something or wanted to go for a walk or insisted on the satisfaction of a fancy, and so on. In the company of the image he was beside himself with bliss and always remained 'inebriated'. I also saw Ramlala doing all that. I sat all the twenty-four hours of the day with the 'father', and kept gazing on Ramlala.

"As days passed on, Ramlala's love for me went on increasing. As long as I remained with the 'father', Ramlala felt happy—he played and sported; but as soon as I came away from that place to my room, he also followed me immediately there. He did not remain with the Sadhu although I forbade him to come. I at first thought it was perhaps a fancy of my brain. How could it otherwise be possible that the boy (in the image) loved me more than him—the boy worshipped by the Sadhu for a long time, whom he loved so dearly, and served so tenderly with devotion? But of what avail were these thoughts? I actually saw—just as I see you before me—that Ramlala accompanied me dancing, now preceding, now following me. Sometimes he importuned to be carried in my lap. Again, when I took him on my lap, he would by no means remain there. He would go down to run hither and thither, collect flowers in thorny jungles or go to the Ganga to swim and splash water there. I said over and over again, 'My child, don't do that, you will get blisters on your soles if you run in the sun; do not remain in water so long, you will catch cold and get fever.' But he did not give ear to my words, however much I might forbid him. Unconcerned he went on with his pranks as if I was speaking to someone else. He would sometimes grin and look at me with his two eyes, beautiful like the petals of a lotus, or carry on his pranks with a vengeance. He would pout both his lips and grimace and make mouths at me. I would then actually be angry and scold him, 'You rascal, wait, I will give you a sound beating today and pound your bones to powder.' Saying so, I would pull him away from the sun or from the water and then cajole him by giving him this thing or that and then ask him to play within the room. Again, finding it impossible to restrain his naughtiness I would sometimes give him a slap or two. Thus beaten, he would pout his beautiful lips and sob and look at me with tears in his eyes, when I would feel pained. I then took him affectionately on my lap and cajoled him. I actually saw and acted thus.

"One day I was going to bathe, when he took an obstinate fancy to go with me. What could I do? I took him with me. Then he would not come out of the water. He turned a deaf ear to all my pleadings. At last I became angry, immersed him in the water and said, 'Be now in the water as long as you like'; and I actually saw that he panted and writhed under the water.

Seeing him suffer thus and thinking to myself ‘What have I done?’ I took him out of water on to my lap.

“It cannot be described how much I felt pained for him on another occasion and how much I wept. That day Ramlala was obstinately demanding something to eat, and I gave him some parched paddy not properly husked, in order to pacify him. I then found that his soft and delicate tongue got lacerated by the husk of the paddy as he was eating. Dear me! What a great pain I felt then! I took him on my lap, wept loudly and taking hold of his chin, sobbed out the words, ‘I was so rash and foolish that I did not at all hesitate to put such contemptible food into the mouth which mother Kausalya used to feed solicitously with such soft delicacies as butter, thickened milk and cream, lest they should hurt him’.” As he was speaking these words, the Master’s past grief burst forth anew and he became restless in our presence and wept so bitterly that we could not restrain our tears though we did not understand a bit of his loving relation with Ramlala.

12. What we thought when we heard of Ramlala from the Master

Chained in Maya, we Jivas, were dumbfounded to hear those words about Ramlala and looked at the image with awe, hopefully wondering if we too could see him living and moving. But, ah, we saw nothing but cold metal! And why should we? We had not got that loving attraction for Ramlala. The affection for Ramachandra had not been so intensified in our minds as to produce in us the eye of love like that of the Master, enabling us to see living Ramlala in and outside also. We see a small doll only and think, “Could what the Master said have happened or can it ever happen?” It is so with us regarding everything in the world and we are resting satisfied with our load of unbelief. Do you not see, the Rishi, the knower of Brahman, says, “Sarvam khalvidam Brahma, neha nanasti kinchana”[1]? That is, there is nothing in the world except the Reality of Brahman, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. There is no real existence for any one of the persons or things that one sees. We thought it might be so. But looking at the world we do not find the slightest trace of the Reality of Brahman, the One without a second. What we see are wood and earth, house and door, man and cow, and

other things of various colours, shapes and sizes. Or at most we see the green, dark-blue,[1] snow-capped mountain arrogantly attempting to touch the deep-blue infinite sky, bedecked with stars, and the streams singing a sweet low murmuring note, flowing down, to teach it lowliness and scolding it with the words “So much arrogance is not good.” Or we see the infinite, tempestuous seas riding the high breakers and rushing forth to swallow everything, but unable to go beyond the shores in spite of a thousand efforts. There we come to the end of our tether and think, “Ha, the Rishi said so under the influence of strong intoxicants?” Suppose now the Rishi says, “No, children, practise self-control and purity and make your mind one-pointed and tranquil, then you will understand and realize what we have said—you will actually see that the world is an intensified manifestation of your own thoughts, and that you see diversity outside because it is there in your mind.“ To this we reply, ”Revered sir, where do we find the time for such practices, we who are restless under the tyranny of the senses and urgency of earning our livelihood?“ Or perhaps we say, ”Your list of duties to be carried out for qualifying to have a direct vision of your Reality called Brahman, cannot be followed in practice in a few days or months or even years. It is doubtful whether man can do it in a whole lifetime. Suppose we apply our minds to it in compliance with what you say, but fail to attain that Reality of Brahman, and see at long last that the attainment of infinite Bliss is but a sophism, we lose both here and hereafter. We are deprived of the enjoyment of worldly pleasures—transitory though they may be—as well as your infinite Bliss. What will happen to us then? No, sir; if you have got the taste of that infinite Bliss, well and good; go on enjoying it happily for the good of generations of your disciples; only allow us to enjoy the little pleasure that can immediately be had from sights, tastes, etc. Pray, don’t raise so much reasoning and so many arguments and invent casuistry to spoil that little enjoyment of ours.”

13. We are attached to modern science because it helps us to increase our enjoyment

The scientist comes and says to us, “I can show you with the help of instruments that one all-pervading substance, a conscious power, exists

uniformly in all things and beings—bricks and trees and plants, men and cattle—and is manifested variously." We also find that the vibration of life is indeed observable in all beings. We say, "Bravo! Fine intellectual sweep! But what is the use of having that knowledge- only? The Rishis, the authors of our scriptures, told us all that long ago.[1] You have, let us admit, demonstrated it now. But can you say that it will add to our enjoyments? It is then only that we can extol your wisdom." The scientist says, "Will it not? It is certain to do so. Just see, how convenient it is for you to get the news from various parts of the globe through the discovery of the power of electricity. How convenient it is for you to earn money, the basis of all your enjoyments, by trade and commerce carried on by means of ships, railways and mills, factories and other machines, all driven by the power of steam. And how convenient it is for you to destroy your enemies, who stand in the way of your enjoyment of pleasures, by the invention of guns and cannon through the understanding of the hidden laws of explosives. This all-pervading power with which you have thus become acquainted today, also cannot but be of some use in future." We reply, "Well, you are right. But invent something as soon as possible, so that our only desideratum viz., our enjoyment, might be increased by the application of this newly discovered power. It is only then that your discovery will be hailed and your intelligence appreciated. Then alone we shall understand that you don't speak under the influence of intoxicants like those authors of the Vedas and the Puranas." The scientist listens, feels the trend of our thoughts and says, "So be it."

14. The result of the Kapalikas preaching religion for selfish enjoyments during the latter part of the Buddhistic age. It is impossible for Yoga and Bhoga to co-exist

All the difficulties that arose in the spiritual world, were due only to the fact that the Rishis, the preachers of the knowledge portion of the Vedas, could not thus say, "So be it." They, therefore, had to live in jungles far away from the bustle of the world and remain satisfied in the company of a few people who were adverse to the enjoyment of worldly pleasures. But it does not seem probable that in the spiritual world in India no attempt at

saying “So be it” has ever been made. Remember the latter part of the Buddhistic age when the Tantric Kapalikas were spreading the processes of rites for killing others, driving others distracted, subduing others and so on. There was a great fuss about alleviating and curing bodily and mental diseases by means of various propitiatory ceremonies and about exorcising evil spirits like ghosts and ghouls. At that time you could not be recognized even as a religious man till you could show some superhuman miraculous power produced by your austerities and feign the power of controlling the destinies of your disciples in such a way that they might have the enjoyment of worldly pleasures without any obstacle. For once, at that time, the religious world girded up its loins to preach to the worldly people that the truths hidden in religion were helpful in fulfilling the desires of enjoyment. But how could light and darkness co-exist? Consequently, the Kapalikas forgot Yoga in a short time, came down to the plane of Bhoga and secretly preached, in the name of religion that liberates one from bondage, desires for extensive enjoyments which bind one tighter to the world of matter. The truly religious people of the country then understood once more that the two, Yoga and Bhoga, were contradictory to each other and could by no means co-exist in one and the same receptacle. When they understood it, they were again in favour of the path of knowledge preached by the seers and began to realize that knowledge in practical life.

15. Worldly people’s fear at the extraordinary renunciation of the Master and his preaching of it

Where is the opportunity for us to concur with the worldly people in their opinions, and say, “So be it”. For, we have begun to tell the story of the Master—one who is not of this world, in whose mind the idea of renunciation was so deep-rooted that his hand would become contracted and insensible at the touch of a metal even during deep sleep, that his respiration stopped and he felt a terrible pain. He was one on whom flashed the knowledge of images of the divine Mother Herself the moment his eyes fell on any female figure—the knowledge which no amount of efforts and temptations[1] on the part of many persons could remove. He was one who was so grievously pained and so terribly angry at the suggestion of

Mathur's making a gift of a property worth several thousand rupees that he ran hither and thither with a stick in his hand to beat Mathur who was supremely devoted to him. He was one who got excited while he was afterwards describing the pain he felt at a similar proposal of Lakshminarayan Marwari, and said, "I felt as if my head was being sawn through!" And he was one in whose mind no objects of worldly enjoyments such as sights, tastes, etc., could ever bring the dark blot of attachment and produce the slightest break in his experience of the super-sensuous bliss of ecstasy. We knew long ago, O man ever eager to enjoy the pleasures of the world, that we would have to put up with much abuse and reproach when we chose to tell you the story of this extraordinary Master. That is not all. We knew also that you would not hesitate to slander this godly character, if any simple-hearted among your sons and grandsons, friends and relatives, would be actually attracted by our words towards that wonderful character and try to renounce the world and worldly enjoyments. But when once we have set our hand to this undertaking, we are not able to desist from it nor are we able to hide the truth even partially. We have to narrate what we know. There is, otherwise, no peace; some one as it were, forces us to speak out. Let us therefore narrate, as far as we know, the story of this extraordinary god-man. Accept as much of this story as you can digest, and "omit the head and tail." Or if you like, you may throw the book away, thinking that a few cock-and-bull stories have been narrated in it by a hemp-smoker, and everyday run to sip honey from new flowers of worldly objects. Afterwards when you fall into the terrible whirlpool of the world and ever arrive at a state, owing to bad luck—or would you like to call it good luck?—wherein you find that "the honey of worldly objects and the flowers of lust" etc., have become stale and insipid, read the life-story of this extraordinary person; you will then find solace yourself and appreciate the worth of our Master too.

16. How Ramlala remained permanently with the Master

In the course of his description of that wonderful behaviour of Ramlala, the Master said, "On some days the holy 'father' would cook food and offer it to Ramlala but could not find him. Wounded at heart, he would then run

up here (to the Master's room) and find him playing in the room. With his feeling of love wounded, he would then scold him, 'I took so much trouble to cook food for you and am searching for you hither and thither; and free from care and forgetful of everything, you are here! That has ever been your way. You do as you fancy. You have no kindness or affection. You left behind your father and went to the forest; your poor father died of weeping but, still you did not return to show yourself to him.' With these and other similar words he used to drag Ramlala to his place and feed him. Time passed in that way. The Sadhu was here for a long time, for Ramlala did not like to leave this place (i.e., me) and go away. He also could not leave behind Ramlala whom he had loved so long.

"Dissolved in tears, the 'father' then came one day and said, 'Ramlala has shown himself to me in the way I wanted to have his vision and has thus quenched the thirst of my life. Moreover, he said he would not go from here; he does not like to leave you behind here and go away. My mind is now free from sorrow and pain. He lives happily with you and plays and sports; I feel beside myself with bliss to see it. I am now in such a state that I feel happy at his happiness. Therefore, I can now leave him with you and go elsewhere. Thinking he is happy with you, I will be happy.' Saying so and giving Ramlala to me he bade good-bye. Ramlala has been here since then."

17. The "father" experienced selfless love in the divine company of the Master

We understood that the holy man had the taste of love free from the slightest tinge of selfishness by virtue of the divine company of the Master and was convinced that on account of that affection there was no fear of separation from the object of his love. He understood that his chosen Ideal, the embodiment of pure love, was always with him and that he could see him whenever he liked. It is doubtless that on that assurance alone, the "father" could leave behind Ramlala who was as dear to him as his life.

18. The faith of a Sadhu in the name of Rama

The Master said, “On another occasion there came a Sadhu who had absolute faith in the name of God. He also belonged to the Ramawat denomination. He had nothing with him except a water-pot and a book. The book was very dear to him. He used to worship it daily with flowers and open and read it now and then. When I became acquainted with him, one day I persuaded him to lend me the book. When I opened it, I found that the only thing written in it with red ink in big letters, was ‘Aum Ramah’. He said, ‘What is the use of reading a large number of books? For, it is from the one divine Lord, that the Vedas and Puranas have come out; He and His name are non-separate. Therefore, what is contained in the four Vedas, the eighteen Puranas and all the other scriptures, is there in any one of His names. That is why His name is my only companion.’ Such was the Sadhu’s faith in the name of God!

19. The devotional songs and couplets of the holy men of the Ramawat community

Thus did the Master tell us of a great many Sadhus and sing for us, from time to time, the devotional songs he had learnt from them. Take for example the songs:

> “You have not, O mind, recognized my Rama, what then have you recognized?
> And what have you known?
> One, who tastes the bliss (derived from taking the name of) Rama, is a true Sadhu.
> But what is he, who tastes the pleasures of worldly objects?
> A true son is he, who delivers the family (from Maya’s grip).
> But what are other sons worth?

And:

> “Worship Ramachandra, the consort of Sita, the lord and king of the Raghus,
> The protector of Ayodhya; there is no second (object of worship).

His smile and words, His gait and naughty bearing, His face and long eyes,
His nose and forehead beautiful with boyish frowns and a mark of saffron, And sandal-paste, giving the appearance of the morning sun,
His dazzling ear-rings, His necklace of pearls shining like stars and dangling on His broad chest "Like the Ganga coming out, piercing the peak of the mountain, green with flora.
This hero of the dynasty of the Raghus, is there walking with His friends on the bank of the Sarayu;
Tulsidas is beside himself with joy gazing and feasting on His beauty and craves for the dust of those lotus feet.

A third:

"He really lives in the world who worships Rama,
He really lives in the world who adores Him.

And the fourth:

"There is no one, except Rama, who can save me." We have forgotten the other lines of these two sweet songs.

Some times he recited for us the couplets he had learnt from those Sadhus. He said, "Sadhus always teach that one should protect oneself against the dangers of committing a theft, of being in women's company and of telling a lie." Saying so, he would forthwith ask us to listen to what was said in Tulsidas's couplet:

'Tulsidas stands security, if God be not realized by truthfulness, obedience and lack of covetousness regarding others' wealth. Tulsidas is a liar, if God be not realized by truthfulness, obedience and looking upon others' wives as mothers.'

"Do you know what obedience is? It is humility. When the right humility comes, egoism is destroyed and God is realized. It is also in Kabir Das's song:

‘Service, worship and humility will make one easily realize the Lord of the Raghus. Be steadfast, O brother, joyfully’.”

20. A desire in the Master’s mind to supply all the necessities of Sadhana to the spiritual aspirants of all denominations. The story of Rajkumar (Achalananda)

On another occasion, the Master said, “At one time a desire arose in my mind that I should supply the aspirants of all communities with all the necessities of Sadhana. They would get all those things, become free from anxiety and practise Sadhana for the realization of God; and I would see it and be happy. I consulted Mathur about it. He said, ‘Where is the difficulty, father? I’ll arrange everything just now. Give whatever you like to anyone. Over and above the already existing arrangement about supplying of uncooked rice, pulses, flour, etc., to each Sadhu, according to his liking, from the store of the temple, Mathur made provision for water-pots, Kamandalus, blankets, seats and even intoxicants, such as hemp and hemp-leaves for those who would take them, and wine etc., for the Tantric worshippers. Many Tantric aspirants used to come at that time and hold Chakras, the holy circles. I used to supply them with peeled ginger and onion, parched rice and pulses which were necessary for their Sadhanas, and look on, while they worshipped the divine Mother with these and called on Her. Again, on many occasions they took me to their circle and placed me at the head of it. They requested me to take consecrated wine, but desisted from making such requests when they came to know that I felt God-intoxicated at the very mention of wine and, therefore, could not take it. As one who sat with them had to take consecrated wine, I put a mark of it on my forehead, smelt it, or, at most, sprinkled it with my fingers into my mouth and poured it into their drinking cups. As soon as they drank it, some applied their minds, I found, to the thought of the Goddess, became absorbed in counting beads or meditation on Her, while others, far from calling on the divine Mother, greedily drank too much and at last became drunk. One day they behaved too improperly, when I stopped giving them wine etc., any more. But I always saw Rajkumar[1] sit for Japa and abstain from applying his mind to anything else as soon as he took it. But

afterwards he had, it seemed, some inclination for name and fame. It was quite natural, for he had his wife and children and on account of wants at home he had to pay a little attention to the acquisition of money. In any case, he used to take wine, only because it was helpful to his Sadhana. He, I saw, never took it greedily or behaved improperly."

21. The Master was switched to spiritual emotion and inebriation at the very mention of the word "hemp" or "wine" and entered into Samadhi at the utterance of what are regarded as obscene words or songs

Many thoughts are cropping up in our minds in connection with the Master's inability to take wine. Many were the occasions on which we actually saw that mentioning the words "hemp," "wine", etc., in the course of conversation, he became filled with divine inebriation and even entered into Samadhi. Many a time we saw the wonderful Master enter into Samadhi uttering the name of that part of the female body, at the very name of which, our rougish minds, proud of culture, are filled with the idea of vile enjoyment; or, knowing that such ideas were sure to arise in their minds, those who consider themselves refined, call it obscene, shut their ears against it or protect themselves by flying to a distance. Again, as soon as he got down from the plane of Samadhi and regained a little normal consciousness, we heard him saying in this connection, "Mother, Thou hast indeed assumed the forms of the fifty letters.[1] Those letters of Thine constitute also the obscene and indecent words. The *ka, kha*[2] of Thy Veda and Vedanta, and those of obscene and indecent words, surely are not different. The obscene and indecent words as well as the Veda and Vedanta are verily Thyself." Saying so, he entered into Samadhi once more. Alas, who will understand, far less explain, what an indescribable wonderful Light beyond the grasp of our minds and intellects there was in the eyes of that extraordinary god-man, that used to illumine all the things, good and bad, of the world! Who can have those eyes to get the vision of the world, which he enjoyed? Be attentive, O reader, cherish these words carefully in your heart with awe and reverence and think how deep and incomprehensible was the mental purity of that wonderful Master!

Ramprasad, on whom the grace of the universal Mother was bestowed, sang:

"I don't drink wine but nectar, crying, 'Victory to Kali' which makes my mind God-intoxicated. Wine-bibbers regard me as drunk with wine..." Before we saw the Master, we could not even conceive that without taking intoxicants, a man by virtue of divine Bliss alone could be in such a drunken state. We remember it very well, when, in our life, we considered the author of a book to be superstitious and foolish when he described Sri Chaitanya as losing his normal consciousness at the utterance of the Lord's name, Hari. During that period there flowed a current of unbelief and doubt of this nature regarding everything in the minds of all the young men of the city. And immediately afterwards we happened to meet this extraordinary Master. Not only did we meet him, but observed him at all times, day and night, and with the eyes of sceptics. We saw his unrestrained dance and constant loss of normal consciousness in the bliss of Kirtan (singing aloud the songs of the Lord's name and divine sports); his losing consciousness of the outside world in pain at the touch of a coin or any metal; his deep inebriation at the mention of intoxicants by their association with the inebriation of divine bliss. And what did we see of him at the mention of the Lord's name or those of His incarnations;? Why? The utterance of the word that rouses the basest animal passion in ordinary men, by its association with the female organ of generation, sent him into divine immaculate supersensuous ecstasy, bringing before his mind the womb of the blissful Mother of the universe from which worlds are created every moment. Are we still to tell you, reader, what qualities of this extraordinary god-man dazzled our eyes for ever in a way that led us to adore him in our hearts as a divine incarnation?

24. Whenever the Master realized perfection in the Sadhana of a particular religious doctrine or faith, the Sadhus of that denomination would come to him

(i) at the house of Ramachandra Datta

Many a time the Master came with his devotees to the Simla (Calcutta) house of his great devotee, Ramchandra Darta and enjoyed great bliss together with the devotees. After enjoying for some time the bliss arising from talking on God, one day, he started for Dakshineswar. Ram Babu's house was situated in a lane.[1] Carriages could not come to the front of the house. One had to leave one's carriage on the main road a little to the east or to the west of the house and walk up to it. A carriage was waiting on the western main road to take the Master to Dakshineswar. The Master started in that direction and the devotees followed him. But the Master was staggering, on account of divine bliss, so much that he could not go those few steps without being helped by others. Two devotees on the two sides caught hold of his hands and helped him to walk slowly. There were some people standing at the bend of the lane. How could they understand the state of the Master? They were talking among themselves, "Oh, how dead-drunk the man has become". Though the words were spoken low, we could hear them and could not but smile and say to ourselves, "Indeed!"

(ii) Second example: in the presence of the Holy Mother at Dakshineswar

One day in the day-time, the Master asked our supremely revered Holy Mother to prepare a few rolls of betel leaf, brush his bedding and sweep clean the room, and went to the Kali temple to pay his obeisance to the Mother, of the universe. She had quickly finished almost all those things when the Master returned from the temple, as if in a completely drunken state; his eyes were red, steps hopelessly unsteady and his words indistinct and inarticulate. He entered the room and came staggering up to the Holy Mother. The Holy Mother was then attentively doing the household work and could not at all know that the Master had come to her in that mood. The Master, like one drunk, then pushed her person and said to her, "Ah, have I drunk wine?" She looked back and was astonished to see the Master in that state. She said, "No, no; why should you drink wine?"

The Master: "Why do I stagger then? Why can I not speak? Am I drunk?"

The Holy Mother: "No, no; why should you drink wine? You have drunk the nectar of Mother Kali's love."

The Master: “You are right.” Saying so he expressed joy.

(iii) The third example: at Kasipur on seeing a drunkard

Since the devotees of Calcutta came to the Master and had his grace, the Master would go once or twice a week to the house of one or other of the devotees. If any body could not come to him at the fixed time and if he could not get news of his welfare from anyone else, the merciful Master would personally go to see him. Again, his mind sometimes would become restless and he would go to Calcutta to see some one if the latter did not come to Dakshineswar at the fixed times. But his auspicious visits, it was invariably seen, were for the good of those devotees. He had not the slightest self-interest. Beni Saha had some good hackney-carriages at Baranagar. As the Master came very often to Calcutta, it was arranged with him that he should send a carriage to Dakshineswar on the Master’s order. He should not raise any objection however late at night the carriage might return from Calcutta. Of course, he should get extra hire at the fixed rate for the extra time. This carriage hire was paid successively by Mathur Babu, Mani Sen of Panihati, Sambhu Mallick and Jayagopal Sen of Sinduriapati, Calcutta. But the devotees to whose house he went, paid the carriage hire for that day if they were in a position to do so.

One day the Master was to go to Jadu Mallick’s house at Calcutta to see his mother who had great devotion for him, for he had no news about the family for a long time. The Master had finished his meal and a carriage arrived when our friend, A., came by boat from Calcutta to pay him a visit. As soon as the Master saw A., he made enquiries regarding his welfare and said, “It is very nice that you have come. I am going to Jadu Mallick’s house today. I shall get down at your house on my way and see G. He could not come here for a considerable time on account of pressure of work. Come, let us go together.” A., who was then newly acquainted with the Master, agreed. He had seen him only on a few occasions in a few places. He, therefore, had not known well that the extraordinary Master had ecstasy, at any place and at any time, when he saw even those things or persons that we call contemptible or detestable or unworthy of touch or look.

Now the Master got into the carriage. The boy-devotee, Latu, now known as Adbhutananda, took with him the Master's bag, towel and other necessary articles and followed the Master into the carriage. Our friend A. also got into the carriage. The Master sat on one side of the carriage and Latu and A. on the other. The carriage started, gradually went beyond Baranagar bazar and was passing by the Mati lake. Nothing particular happened on the way. The Master saw this or that on his way and was asking Latu or A. about it like a boy; or he raised this topic or that and was going on merrily as in the ordinary normal condition.

There was something like an ordinary bazar to the south of the Mati lake. And farther south there were a wine shop, a dispensary, a few stables and some tiled houses forming a warehouse for rice for sale. To the south of this place the broad road to the well-known temple of Sri Sarvamangala and Chitreswari led to the bank of the Ganga. One had to keep that road to the right to go to Calcutta.

Some drunkards were then sitting in the grog shop, drinking wine and were noisily making merry. Some of them were singing joyfully; and some dancing with gesticulations. And the owner of the shop, having engaged his servant in selling wine to them was standing absent-mindedly at the door of the shop. There was a big mark of vermilion on his forehead.. Now, the Master's carriage was passing before the shop. The shop-keeper seemed to know the Master, for, when he saw him, he raised his hands and saluted him.

The noise attracted the Master's attention to the shop, and he happened to see the drunkards expressing their joy noisily. As soon as he saw their merry-making due to the drinking of wine (Karana), the memory of the blissful nature of the universal Cause arose in his mind through association. It was not the memory alone, but its direct experience also followed and he was completely filled with inebriation and his words became indistinct. That was not all. He brought out suddenly a part of his person and his right leg out of the carriage, placed his foot on the foot-board and stood there. Like one drunk, he expressed joy at the sight, moving his hands; and making gesticulations of his body cried out loudly, "Very nice, fine enjoyment, bravo, bravo!"

A. said, “We had no previous indication that the Master would suddenly be in that state. He had been talking like one in the normal state. But no sooner had he seen the drunkards than he was in that condition. I was benumbed with fear. In a great hurry I stretched my arms with a view to dragging his body into the carriage and making him sit, when Latu interfered and said, ‘Nothing need be done; he will control himself and will not fall down.’ I therefore remained quiet, but my heart went on throbbing violently for some time. I thought, ‘How very wrong it was for me to drive in the same carriage with this mad Master! I’ll never do so again.’ All these events, of course, took much less time to happen than to describe. The carriage left that shop behind and the Master sat quiet within it and happening to see the temple of Sri Sarvamangala, said, ‘There is Sarvamangala. She is an awakened deity. Salute Her.’ Saying so, he himself saluted the Devi when we also did so in imitation of him from that distance. Then, I looked at the Master and saw him in quite a normal state smiling gently. But the throbbing of my heart did not come to an end for a long time, thinking he might have fallen and even died.

“When afterwards the carriage came and stood at the gate of the house, he said to me, ‘Is G. in? Please go and see!’ I went and came back to say, ‘no’. He then said, ‘Well! I cannot see G.; I thought of asking him to give today’s extra carriage hire. But I am now acquainted with you, will you give a rupee? Jadu Mallick, you know, is a miserly man; he will not pay more than the fixed rate of two rupees and four annas only. But who knows how late at night I shall return after meeting the devotees? Again, the driver repeatedly asks us to make haste and annoys us when we are very late. Therefore, it has been arranged with Beni that the driver should not create any disturbance if three rupees and four annas be paid, however late it may be before I return. Jadu will pay two rupees and four annas, and there will remain no difficulty for today’s hire if you pay one rupee. That is why I say so. Hearing all this I handed over a rupee to Latu and saluted the Master when he went to see Jadu Mallick.”

23. The Sadhus of all denominations that came to Dakshineswar got help from the Master in religious matters

Such a "drunken" state came daily at any time on the Master. Alas, how few of these examples can we record and tell the reader! Thus on many occasions the Master narrated, not only to us but to many other people, the stories of many monks and aspirants that came to the Kali temple at Dakshineswar. There are many people living even now who can bear testimony to it. We were then studying in the St. Xavier's college. It remained closed on two days a week, Thursday and Sunday. As there was a crowd of devotees with the Master on Saturdays and Sundays, we used to go to him on Thursdays also which gave us the opportunity of hearing of various events of his life from his own lips. From the description of all these events, we could clearly understand that, besides the Bhairavi Brahmani, Swami Tota Puri, the Muslim Govinda, the monk who came providentially to Dakshineswar[1] to save the body of the Master by forcibly feeding him during his stay in the highest Nirvikalpa plane continuously for six months, and one or two others, each one of the monks and aspirants of various denominations, that had visited Dakshineswar before we went there, had come to have new spirit infused into his religious life with the help of the light of the Master's extraordinary divine life. Having thus reached the acme of their life, they got the opportunity of showing the true aspirants of their denominations, thirsting for spirituality, how to realize God along their own paths. Each of them came only to learn and, having perfected his knowledge, went away to his own place. Although the Bhairavi Brahmani, Tota Puri and some others, were very fortunate in coming and helping the Master in his spiritual life, they too were blessed to realize, on the strength of the divine life and power of the Master, those hidden spiritual truths which they were unable to experience in their own lives in spite of their life-long Sadhanas.

24. Whenever the Master realized perfection in the Sadhana of a particular religious doctrine or faith, the Sadhus of that denomination would come to him

It does not take one long to understand another truth when one studies the order of the coming of those Sadhus and Sadhakas to the Master at Dakshineswar. And because it will be convenient to study the order in

which they came, we have in this chapter tried to tell the reader the narratives of the Master in his own language as far as possible and in their proper order and sequence, exactly as we heard them from him. We heard from the Master himself that, whenever he engaged himself in the discipline and worship of particular aspects of God and realized them, the true aspirants of those communities, devoted to those aspects of the deity, began to pour in, in groups, for some time; and days and nights were passed with them in the discussion of those divine aspects. As soon as he attained perfection in the worship of the Mantra of Rama, the monks of the Ramawat denomination started coming to him in large numbers. No sooner had he been established in each of the devotional moods of Santa, Dasya, etc., spoken of in the Vaishnava books of Bengal, than devotees practising those moods streamed in. The then eminent Tantric aspirants of this part of the country came to him, when he had completed the discipline prescribed in the sixty-four Tantras, with the help of the Bhairavi Brahmani. Hardly had he perfected himself and attained immediate experience of Brahman, according to the non-dual doctrine, when the good Sadhakas of the Paramahamsa denomination came to him in large numbers.

25. The manifestation of power in all the incarnations of God is not seen to be the same. For, some of them came to impart religion to a particular people, and some to all humanity

Even a boy will not take long to understand that there is a hidden meaning in the fact that the aspirants of different denominations came thus to have the divine company of the Master. At the auspicious advent of the incarnation of the age, it always happened thus in the world in the past and will happen so in the future. According to a mysterious law of the spiritual world, these incarnations are born in every age in order to avert the decline of religion or to brighten up the almost extinguished light of spirituality. But, when we study their lives we find that there is a difference in the manifestation of power in them, and it becomes clear that some of them came to remove the want of a particular part of a country, or of a few particular communities, while others came to remove the lack of spirituality in the whole world. But, all of them, it is seen everywhere, promulgate their

own doctrines and the knowledge discovered by them, and keep intact the authenticity of the spiritual teachings of the preceding sages, teachers and incarnations, instead of destroying them. For, through their divine Yogic powers, they see an order of succession and a relation amongst the previous spiritual doctrines and faiths. That history of the spiritual world and the relation amongst the ancient religious doctrines always remain hidden from our vision which is blinded by attachment to worldly objects. They see the previous religious doctrines as strung together "like a string of gems,"[1] and add the next required gem to it in the light of their experiences of spirituality and quietly pass out.

26. The comparison of the manifestation of spiritual power of the incarnations, the founders of Hindu, Jewish, Christian and Muslim religions on the one hand and that of the Master on the other

We shall understand this clearly by the study of the history of some foreign religions. Take for example, Jesus, who came and promulgated the truths experienced by him and kept intact the religious doctrines preached by the Jewish teachers. Again, Mohammad came a few centuries later and preached his own doctrine without destroying the doctrines promulgated by Jesus. This does not prove that the doctrines preached by the Jewish teachers or by Jesus are imperect; in other words, this does not prove that by following those doctrines one cannot realize those aspects of God which they realized. That can surely be done. Again, by following the doctrine preached by Mohammad, one can also realize that aspect of God which Mohammad did. This is the law everywhere in the spiritual world. It must be understood that the same law applies to the religious doctrines of India too. You will realize any particular aspect of God by rightly following that particular doctrine, preached for that purpose by the Vedic Rishis or the great teachers, the authors of the Tantras and the Puranas. The Master engaged himself in the disciplines according to the doctrines of all denominations one after another, realized this grand truth just mentioned, and communicated it to us.

27. The reason why the Sadhus and Sadhakas of all denominations came to the Master

"When the flower blossoms, bees come." The Master told us many a time that this was the law in the spiritual world also. It is according to this law that as soon as an incarnation of God gets illumination or realizes the truth of the spiritual world, those thirsting for religion are attracted to him in order to know and learn it. The reason why the aspirants of all denominations came to the Master, group after group, and not merely those of one denomination only, is that, having trod all denominational paths and having realized all the aspects of God realizeable through them, he could give specific information about each of them. But all of these aspirants did not achieve perfection in the practice of their own doctrines nor could they recognize the Master as the "incarnation of the age". It was the best of them only who could do so. But each of them made progress along his own path by virtue of the divine company of the Master and was perfectly convinced that he would certainly realize God at the right time if he went on his own path. It is superfluous to add that decline in religion arises through loss of faith in one's own path, which makes it impossible for the aspirant to realize spirituality in his own life.

28. It is not true that the spiritual propensity in the Master got awakened by virtue of his company with the Sadhus who came to Dakshineswar

There is wide-spread talk nowadays that the Master learnt the methods of Sadhana leading to God-realization from those monks, engaged himself in too severe austerities and went mad at one time, that his brain became deranged and there came on him a permanent physical disease of losing normal consciousness under the influence of excessive emotion of any kind. My God! We are such a herd of learned fools! The race of the Rishis of India showed in their own lives and explained to us through the Vedas and the Puranas, that the normal consciousness vanished, as one ascended to the plane of Samadhi through the complete concentration of mind. They left behind for us the full explanation of the scriptures relating to Samadhi, which does not exist among any other people anywhere. And all the great souls who have till now been regarded in the world as incarnations of God

and been receiving the reverence of human hearts in all countries experienced, in their own lives, this loss of consciousness and explained to us again and again that it was inevitable in spiritual progress. But, in spite of all this, if we still speak or listen to and believe those hollow words, God help us! O reader, if you think it is desirable, you may hear those meaningless words credulously; may you and those who say so prosper! But kindly allow us the liberty of lying at the feet of this wonderful, God intoxicated man. And try once more to understand it well, before you decide it one way or the other. See that the state described by the ancient author of the Upanishad,[1] does not come on you:

"Just as, one blind man guided by another, meets with disaster, so, people, devoid of discrimination, who consider themselves to be intelligent and well versed in the scriptures, live in ignorance and pass through various transmigrations."

It is not a new thing that the Master's Bhavasamadhi is called a disease. Many persons educated in the Western way said so, even while the Master was living. But as time passed on, the "insane" talks and predictions of that divinely inebriated man came true more and more; and the more his extraordinary ideas were eagerly sought and accepted by the people all over the world, the more did their statement lose its force. It met with the same fate as a handful of dust thrown at the moon. And fully discovering that all such statements were erroneous, people came to the certain conclusion that the Master's words were true and preserved their tranquillity of mind. It will happen so now also, for truth cannot be kept covered any more than fire, by a piece of cloth. It is therefore not necessary for us to make any effort to expound it further. We would quote a word or two of the Master himself on this topic and pass on to another.

29. The loss of normal consciousness during the Master's Samadhi was not a disease. The conversation between the Master and Sivanath is a proof of it

Our revered friend Sri Sivanath Sastri, who was one of the teachers of the General Brahmo Samaj, said to some of us during the life-time of the Master, that the Master's Bhavasamadhi was a disease (hysteria or epileptic

fits) produced by nervous disorder and simultaneously expressed the opinion that he became unconscious at the time like ordinary people suffering from that disease. This remark gradually reached the Master's ear. Much earlier, Sivanath used to visit the Master from time to time. One day when he came to Dakshineswar, the Master raised that topic and said to him, "Look here, Sivanath, is it true that you call these a disease and say that I become unconscious at that time? Ah, you people remain all right, although you apply your minds night and day to insentient things like brick, wood, earth, money, etc., and I, who think night and day of Him whose consciousness makes the whole universe conscious, become unconscious! Where have you borrowed your intellect from?" Sivanath remained silent.

30. The reason why the Master behaved like a mad man during the time of his Sadhana

The Master used the words "divine madness", "madness of knowledge", etc., to us every day and freely said to all that a powerful storm of divine love raged in his life for twelve years. He used to say, "Ah, just as, when dust is raised by a storm, all things look alike and trees like the mango, jack-fruit, etc., cannot be seen, far less distinguished from one another, even so a state came on me which did not allow me to know good from bad, praise from blame, cleanliness from uncleanliness! There was one thought, one idea only, viz., how to realize Him. This was what occupied the mind every moment. People said, 'He has become mad'."

31. Some of the Sadhakas that came to Dakshineswar were initiated by the Master. For example Sri Narayan Sastri

Some of the learned aspirants that came to the Master at Dakshineswar in those days were, owing to their excessive devotion, initiated in Mantras and even in Sannyasa by him before they left. Pandit Narayan Sastri was one of them. We were told by the Master himself that the Pandit lived with his teachers like the orthodox Brahmacharins of ancient days, and studied various Sastras continuously for twenty-five years. He had always a strong desire to have equal knowledge of and mastery over all the six Darsanas

and lived with different teachers at Kasi and other places in the north-western part of the country and had the complete mastery of five of them. But if he did not finish his study of the Nyaya philosophy with the well-known teachers of Nyaya at Navadwip in Bengal, he could not have complete mastery over that system and so could not be regarded as one of the eminent scholars of Nyaya. He, therefore, had come to this part of the country about eight years before he visited the Master at Dakshineswar. He lived for seven years at Navadwip and finished his studies in the Nyaya philosophy. He was ready to go home. Perhaps he entertained doubts whether he would be able to visit these parts of the country over again. So he came to see Calcutta and visited Dakshineswar situated near that city, when he had the privilege of meeting the Master.

32. The antecedents of Sri Sastri

Sri Sastri had been known as a scholar in the country even before he came to Bengal to study Nyaya. Hearing the name of Sri Sastri at one time, the Maharaja of Jaipur, we were told by the Master himself, had a desire to appoint him as his court-pandit, and respectfully invited him with the promise of a high salary. But Sri Sastri's thirst for knowledge had not yet been quenched; and his eager desire for getting complete mastery over the six orthodox schools of Indian philosophy yet remained unfulfilled. So he had to reject the Maharaja's cordial invitation. Sri Sastri, we infer, belonged formerly to some province near Rajputana.

33. He finished that study and had the privilege of meeting the Master

Narayan Sastri was not like ordinary scholars. Detachment from the world was gradually growing in his heart along with the knowledge of the scriptures. He could clearly understand that no one could have real mastery of the Vedanta and other scriptures by a mere study without practice. Therefore, even before he finished his studies, there arose in his mind from time to time the idea, "I am afraid, I am not acquiring right knowledge in this way. I'll practise Sadhana for some time and try to realize what the scriptures say." But he suppressed the desire of engaging himself in

Sadhana and applied his mind again to his studies, lest he should lose both, by thus giving up half-finished a subject which he had been trying to master. Now, as he had acquired a thorough knowledge of the six philosophical systems, that long-cherished desire of his was fulfilled. He now wanted to return home. He had already decided in his mind that he would do what was considered proper on his going back home. At this auspicious moment of his life he met the Master and, as soon as he saw him, he felt drawn towards him, rather in a mysterious way.

We have already said that, at the Dakshineswar Kali temple, there were good arrangements for the boarding and lodging of guests, Fakirs, Sadhus, Sannyasins, Pandits and so on. No wonder therefore that he was respectfully allowed to live there as long as he liked; for, besides being a Brahmin Brahmacharin, belonging to a distant part of the land, he was a good scholar. It was a beautiful place providing food and other necessities and affording the company of such a god-man! Sri Sastri made up his mind to spend some time there before going away. And what else could he do? The more intimately he mixed with the Master, the more did a certain feeling of love for him grow in his heart and the more intensely did a desire to know him deeper and deeper prevail in him. The Master too expressed his joy on getting the simple-hearted, magnanimous Sastri for a companion and spent much time with him in conversation about God.

34. Sastriji's resolve, owing to the divine company of the Master

Sastriji had read about the seven planes spoken of in the Vedanta. He knew from his study of the scriptures that, as soon as the mind ascended to higher and higher planes of consciousness, there came wonderful experience and visions followed at last by the Nirvikalpa Samadhi. And it was in that state that man got merged in the immediate experience of the reality of Brahman, the indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Itself, and that the delusion of the world clinging to him for ages without beginning, vanished altogether. He saw that the Master had the immediate knowledge of what Sastriji merely had read about in the books and got by heart. He found that he himself merely uttered the words Samadhi, immediate knowledge, etc., while the Master was actually experiencing what they

meant, at any time during day and night in course of his conversation about God. Sastriji thought, “Ah, how wonderful! Where else shall I have such a person to teach and explain the hidden meanings of the Sastras? This opportunity must not be missed. The means of immediate knowledge of Brahman must be obtained from him at any cost. Life is uncertain indeed. Who knows when this body will come to an end? Shall I die before attaining right knowledge? That cannot be. At least one sincere effort to realize God must be made. Let home and all that go for the present.”

35. Sastriji felt detachment

As days passed on, detachment and eagerness to know Truth grew more and more in Sastriji as a result of the divine company of the Master. The desires such as, “I shall startle all by my scholarship”, “I shall become a Mahamahopadhyaya[1], and acquire name, position, fame, etc., more than others”, appeared to be contemptible aims of life to be shunned and avoided by all means; and they gradually vanished altogether from his mind. Sastriji lived with the Master like a disciple in a mood of true humility, listened attentively to his nectar-like words and thought, “The mind must not be applied any more to anything else; there is no knowing when the body will meet with its end; now, when there is yet time, efforts must be made to realize God.” He reflected on the Master, “Ah, how free from anxiety he lives, knowing what one should know and understand in life! Even death has been conquered by him; it can no longer hold before him the horrible shadow of the ‘night of destruction’. Well, the author of the Upanishad[1] says that all the wishes of such great souls become fulfilled and that, if one can truly obtain their grace, one’s desire of experiencing the world again and again vanishes and one attains the knowledge of Brahman. Why then should I not importune him for this grace? Why should I not take refuge in him? Sastriji went on pondering this way and lived with the Master at Dakshineswar. But, he could not, all on a sudden, make any request to him lest he should consider him to be unfit and refuse to take him under his shelter. Time rolled on thus.

36. Sastriji was annoyed to speak with Michael Madhusudan

The following event proves that detachment from the world was becoming intense in Sastriji's mind day after day. Michael Madhusudan Datta, a great and glorious poet of Bengal, was, at that time, conducting a case on behalf of Rasmani. One day he had to come to the Dakshineswar Kali temple with a descendant of the Rani in order to know everything about the case precisely. After he had finished his business regarding the case, he came to know in the course of the conversation that the Master was there, and expressed a desire to see him. When word was sent to the Master, he at first sent Sastriji to speak with Madhusudan and himself went a little after. While he was talking with him, Narayan Sastri asked him the reason why he gave up his own religion and accepted that of Jesus. Michael said in reply that financial pressure compelled him to do so. We cannot say whether, reluctant to reveal his own story to a stranger, he replied to the question in that manner. But it appeared to the Master and the others present that he was actually speaking out his own mind and did not say so by way of joke or sarcasm to hide the truth about himself. Be that as it may, Sastriji became much annoyed with him to hear that answer. He said, "What, to give up one's own religion for the sake of maintaining oneself in this ephemeral world! What a mean consideration! Die one must some day; you should rather have died." He thought, "And yet people call him a great man and read his books with appreciation!" A great abhorrence came upon Sastriji's mind and he desisted from speaking any more to him.

37. The conversation between the Master and Michael

Madhusudan then expressed a desire to listen to some religious instruction from the Master. The Master said to us, "My mouth was pressed as it were by someone, and I was not allowed to speak anything." Hriday and some others say that that mood of the Master left him a little afterwards, and he moved Madhusudan's mind by singing in his sweet voice a few songs of Ramprasad, Kamalakanta and other eminent Sadhakas, and taught him thereby that devotion to God was the only essential thing in the world.

38. Sastriji wrote his own opinion on the wall

Even after Michael had bidden good-bye, Sri Sastri discussed and denounced Michael's playing the renegade and wrote with a piece of charcoal in big letters on the wall of the verandah to the east of the door leading to the Master's room that to give up one's own religion under the stress of one's monetary needs was a very mean act. Sri Sastri's opinion on this matter, written on the wall in distinct big Bengali characters, attracted our notice and produced curiosity in us. One day we made an enquiry and came to know everything. As Sri Sastri had-lived in this part of the country for a long time, he had learnt Bengali very well.

39. Sastriji was initiated in Sannyasa and practised austerities

Now comes the last thing known in Sri Sastri's life. One day he happened to meet the Master in a secluded place, took that opportunity to express the desire of his heart and insisted tenaciously that he should be initiated in Sannyasa. The Master agreed on account of his eagerness and initiated him on an auspicious day. After that Sastriji left the Kali temple. He expressed to the Master the desire of his heart that he would make a strenuous effort to realize Brahman at Vasishthasrama, till his aim was fulfilled. Dissolved in tears, he asked for the Master's blessings, worshipped his feet and left Dakshineswar behind for ever. No certain news of Narayan Sastri was received after this; some say that he lived at Vasishthasrama practising severe austerities, which resulted in a physical disease due to which he died.

40. It was natural with the Master to pay visit to monks and aspirants

Again, the Master felt a desire to see the monks, aspirants and devotees of all communities whenever he heard of their stay in the neighbourhood. When he felt that desire, he used to go unasked to them and spend some time in talks about God. At that time no consideration such as "Would people think ill or well of it", "Would the Sadhakas unknown to me be pleased or displeased with my visit" or "Would I myself be properly respected", would ever cross his mind. He would go somehow or other to the aspirants and would not rest till he had formed a correct idea regarding their spiritual attitudes, their progress towards the goal and other relevant

matters. The Master also behaved very often in the same way, when he heard of scholars learned in the scriptures, who were also aspirants. He paid such visits to Pandit Padmalochan, Dayananda Saraswati and many others and narrated stories about their lives to us now and then. We are now going to tell the reader about Padmalochan first of all.

41. The reason why the Nyaya philosophy entered Bengal

The study of the Vedanta was very rare in Bengal before the advent of the Master. Although Acharya Sankara had defeated the Tantrics of this province in theological polemics many centuries ago, he could scarcely establish his own doctrine among the people in general. Consequently, the Tantras accepted as true the radical principle of non-dualism spoken of in the Vedanta, introduced a little of it into their own process of meditation and prescribed worship and other ceremonies amongst the public as before. And the Pandits of Bengal devoted the whole energy of their fertile brain to the study of the Nyaya philosophy, created the Navya Nyaya, Neo-Logic, and brought about an extraordinary revolution in the realm of that system. Was it due to the fact that the people of Bengal were defeated and humiliated in argumentation by Sankara, that the study of that philosophy became so much prevalent amongst them? Who can say? But many a time has the world witnessed it that, defeated in a certain field by a particular nation, the defeated and humiliated have nursed a desire and made an effort, to surpass all in that same field.

42. Padmalochan, the Vedantic scholar

Although the study of the Vedanta was so scarce in Bengal, the nursery of Tantra and Nyaya, it was not as if no one was attracted to the study of the liberal conclusions of the Vedanta. Pandit Padmalochan was one who was attracted. After he had acquired efficiency in Nyaya, the Pandit had a desire to study the Vedanta. He went to Kasi, lived with his teachers and studied that philosophy for a long time. Thereupon, he became famous as a Vedantin in a few years. On his return home, he was invited by the Maharaja of Burdwan and was appointed as a court-pandit. As the

wonderful genius of the Pandit went on unfolding, he was gradually promoted to the post of the principal court-pandit. His fame spread throughout Bengal.

43. An example of the wonderful genius of the Pandit

It will not be out of place here to mention a remark by the Pandit indicative of his wonderful genius. Expatiating on the theme that narrow opinions in spiritual matters were due to meanness of nature, the Master sometimes quoted to us the Pandit's remarks on the subject. For, the extraordinary, truthful Master always remembered whatever he heard from any one expressive of the liberal doctrine after his heart and, while quoting it in the course of conversation, he mentioned the name of the person from whom he had heard it first.

44. Who is the greater of the two, Siva or Vishnu?

Once upon a time, the Master said, there arose a great controversy amongst the scholars of the court as to who was greater, Siva or Vishnu. Padmalochan was not present there. The scholars who were present grew noisy in their disputation, some supporting the one and some supporting the other, according to their own knowledge of the scriptures, or perhaps according to their own temperamental preference. Thus a quarrel went on between the two parties, the Saivas and the Vaishnavas. No solution of the problem could be found. Therefore, the principal court-pandit was summoned to decide the question. Pandit Padmalochan arrived at the assembly. And when he heard the question, he said, "None of my forefathers up to the fourteenth generation saw either Siva or Vishnu. How can I, therefore, say who is superior and who is inferior? But if you want to know what the scriptures say, it has to be said that the Saiva scriptures call Siva greater and the Vaishnava ones, Vishnu. So, one's own chosen Ideal is greater than all other deities." With this remark, the Pandit quoted as proofs verses indicating that both were greater than all other deities and concluded that both were equally great. This conclusion of the Pandit brought the quarrel to an end and everybody thanked him. We get a definite proof of his

genius in this outspokenness and frank and unpretentious knowledge of the scriptures and get the clue to his great name and fame.

45. The Pandit's love of God

It was not only because he travelled far into the great wood of multitudinous words that the Pandit became so famous. Acquainted in their daily life with the repeated manifestations of his noble qualities of liberality, non-attachment, good conduct, practice of austerities, steadfast devotion to his chosen Ideal, etc., people came to the conclusion that he was an unusually great Sadhaka and lover of God. The co-existence of true scholarship and profound devotion to God is rare indeed in the world. So, people are attracted towards a person in whom both these are found. It was therefore no wonder that, when the Master heard of him, he had a desire to see that good soul who had been adorning the court of Burdwan for a long time and was approaching his old age.

46. The nature of the Master's mind; the Pandit came to Calcutta

Whenever there was any desire in the Master's mind, he, like a boy, became anxious to fulfil it immediately. The Master's mind acquired that trait, perhaps because he had taught his mind since his childhood, "Life is ephemeral, do quickly what has to be done" and performed every action with intense eagerness. Again, a little thinking brings out the fact that the mind becomes endowed with that disposition as the result of practising one-pointedness and steadfastness. Anyway, seeing the Master eager, Mathuranath was thinking of sending him to Burdwan when the news came that, as Pandit Padmalochan had been ill for a long time, he had been brought to a garden near Ariyadaha, on the bank of the Ganga for a change of climate and that, owing to the pure fresh air of the place, he had improved a little. Hriday was sent to know whether the news was true.

He returned and confirmed the news. The Pandit had heard of the Master and was very eager to see him. He showed great respect to Hriday knowing that he was a relative of the Master. A day was then fixed. The Master started to see the Pandit; Hriday accompanied him.

47. The Pandit saw the Master for the first time

Hriday said that the Master and Padmalochan were pleased to see each other when they met for the first time. The Master could find him to be a Sadhaka, of a liberal nature, amiable and well versed in the Sastras. The pandit also had the conviction that the Master was a great soul and was in an extraordinary state of spirituality. He could not refrain from shedding tears to hear the name of the divine Mother sung by the Master in his sweet voice. The Pandit became speechless on seeing the Master lose normal consciousness in ecstasy over and over again and on hearing what experience he had in that state. The Pandit, well versed in the scriptures, tried, we can clearly understand, to compare the spiritual states of the Master with those recorded in the scriptures. But it is also certain that, in doing so, he felt a difficulty that day and could not come to any certain conclusion. For, not finding the ultimate experiences of the Master recorded in the Sastras, he could not perfectly ascertain whether what were written in the Sastras or the experiences of the Master, were true. Therefore, the discriminating mind of the Pandit, always accustomed to arriving at sure conclusions in all spiritual matters with the help of scriptural knowledge and keen intellect, experienced a sort of restlessness in the midst of joy like a spot of darkness in light.

48. The reason why the Pandit's devotion and reverence increased

On account of the love and attraction which sprang up during their first acquaintance with each other, the Master and the Pandit met together a few times more. Consequently, the conviction of the Pandit about the Master's spiritual state grew deeper and profounder. We heard from the Master himself that there was a special reason why the Pandit had that firm conviction.

Pandit Padmalochan had been practising for a long time the disciplines prescribed by the Tantras along with the Vedantic discussion on knowledge and had some realization of their results. The Master said that the divine Mother revealed to him the secret of the Pandit's power attained through spiritual practices. He came to know that it was only because the Devi, the

Pandit's chosen Ideal, was pleased with him on account of his Sadhana and granted him a boon, that he became invincible in innumerable meetings of scholars and could keep secure his superiority. Padmalochan had always with him a towel and a spouted-pot filled with water. It was a favourite habit with him to take them in his hand, walk a few steps hither and thither, come back and wash his mouth and sprinkle his head with that water before he went forward to solve any problem. Nobody had ever any curiosity to inquire into the reason for this queer habit of his, and nobody ever thought that it had a hidden purpose. The Pandit never disclosed it to anybody, not even to his wife, that he used to do so according to the advice of his chosen Ideal and that, when he did so, intelligence, scriptural knowledge and presence of mind were completely awakened in him through divine grace and made him invincible to others. The Devi advised him privately in his heart of hearts to do so. From that time he followed that advice perfectly for a long time and experienced its result without the knowledge of others.

49. The Master could know the miraculous power of the Pandit

The Master said that he could know all this by the grace of the divine Mother. And one day, finding an opportunity he concealed the Pandit's towel and spouted-pot. Padmalochan could not engage himself in the solution of the problem under discussion in the absence of those things and was busy searching for them. When, afterwards, he came to know that the Master had concealed them, his astonishment knew no bounds; when, again, he understood that the Master had come to know everything before he had done so, the Pandit could not help reciting hymns to and singing praises of the Master as his own chosen Ideal. The Pandit came to regard him as an incarnation of God from that time and was devoted to him accordingly. The Master said, " Though Padmalochan was so great a scholar, he had so much faith in and devotion to 'here' (me)! He said, 'When I shall come round, I'll convene a meeting of all the scholars and tell them all that you are an incarnation of God. I'll see who can refute my word.' Mathur, at one time, for another reason, was going to convene a meeting at Dakshineswar of all the scholars. Padmalochan, an unavaricious Brahmin, who was of a virtuous orthodox disposition, would never accept a

gift from a Sudra. Thinking that he would not come to the meeting, Mathur asked me to request him to be present there. At the request of Mathur, I asked the Pandit affectionately, 'Will you not come to Dakshineswar?' He said, 'I may go to a sweeper's house with you and take my food there. Is it too much that I should go to a meeting in the house of a person of the caste of fishermen?' "

50. The Pandit passed away in Kasi, the abode of the universal Lord

But the Pandit was not to come to the meeting convened by Mathur Babu. Before the meeting could be called, his physical illness increased. He bade good-bye to the Master with tears in his eyes and went to Kasi. It is said he passed away there shortly after.

When, long afterwards, the Calcutta devotees of the Master took refuge at his holy feet and in their exuberance of devotion, some of them were calling him publicly an incarnation, the Master came to know of it and sent them word not to do so. He got the news a few days later that they had not desisted from doing so. Annoyed at this, he said to us, "One is a doctor and another is the manager of a theatre; they come here and call me an incarnation! They think they extol me by calling me such. But what do they understand of what is called an incarnation? Long before they came here and called me an incarnation, many persons like Padmalochan, who spent their whole lives in the study of these things—some well versed in the six philosophical systems, some in three—came here and called me an incarnation. To be called an incarnation has become contemptible to me. What will they add to me by calling me such?"

Besides Padmalochan, the Master met some other famous scholars from time to time. He told us now and again, in the course of conversation, the special noble qualities he saw in them. It will not be out of place here to narrate briefly the stories of a few such scholars.

51. The Master on Dayananda

Once Swami Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, came to Bengal on a tour and lived for some time in a gentleman's garden in the

village called Sinthi in Baranagar, situated to the north of Calcutta. Although he was very well known as a good scholar, he did not then preach his own doctrine and had not founded his organization. On hearing of him, one day the Master came there to pay him a visit. In the course of a conversation on Dayananda, the Master said to us on one occasion, "I went to see him in the garden of Sinthi; I found that he had acquired a little power; his chest was always red. He was in the state of Vaikhari, speaking on scriptural subjects night and day; he misapplied grammar and twisted the meanings of many words. He had in his mind the egoism, 'I'll do something, I'll found a doctrine.'"

52. Pandit Jayanarayan

The Master said about Pandit Jayanarayan, "Although a great scholar, he was free from pride. He had foreknowledge of the time of his death and said that he would go to Kasi and pass away there. And so it happened."

53. Krishnaki-shore, the devotee

The Master mentioned many times the great devotion to Sri Ramachandra of Krishnakishore Bhattacharya of Ariyadaha. He used to visit his house. The highly devoted wife of Krishnakishore also had much devotion for the Master. The Master said that Krishnakishore had great devotion even to the Mantra, "mara" as a great one, imparted by the Rishi, let alone his devotion to the name, "Rama". For, that word as a Mantra was, it is written in the Purana, imparted by the Rishi Narada to Valmiki, then a notorious highwayman. And as the result of its repeated utterance with devotion, the extraordinary divine play of Sri Ramachandra was manifested in Valmiki's mind and this made him the poet and author of the *Ramayana.* Krishnakishore met with much grief and misery in the world. Two of his grown-up sons died. The effect of the grief due to the death of one's son, the Master said, was so great that, even Krishnakishore, although a great devotee, could not control himself and was overwhelmed with grief.

Besides the Sadhakas mentioned above, the Master, saw Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar and others. He

spoke to us occasionally of the Maharshi's liberal devotion and Iswarchandra's attachment to the Yoga of action.

Footnote

1. The Master knew less than a dozen English words and phrases which he would use humorously now and then. ‘Young Bengal’ was one such phrase.—Tr.

2. Sannyasins beg food from door to door as they go. But theirs is Adainya-Bhiksha, i.e., begging minus the attendant humiliation. With the Lord’s name on their lips (Narayana Hari), they stand for a reasonable time at the door and then without the least pain or pleasure, they move on.—Tr.

1. i.e. Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute.—Tr.

1. Ramawat Sadhus are known as Babajis or ‘fathers’ throughout India.

2. Ramlala, that is, the boy Sri Ramachandra. The people in the north-western part of India affectionately call boys and girls ‘lalas’ and ‘lalis’ respectively. That is why, the image made of the eight metals, a symbol of the child Ramachandra, was called Ramlala by that ‘father’. In the Bengali language also the words ‘dulal and dulali’ are used in the same sense. (The prefix ‘du’ means haughty).

1. *Chhandogya Upanishad* 3. 14. 1; *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* 4. 4. 19.

1. This favourite expression of the author implies that it looks green when it is near, and dark-blue at a distance.—Tr.

1. “Antahsamjna bhavantyete sukhaduhkha-samanwitah”. Even insentient things like trees and stones have consciousness. The experiencing of pain and pleasure is also there in them.—Manu.

1. II 8. 31, III. 6. 15, IV. 1. 29.—Tr.

1. He used to live now and again at Kalighat and was known by the name of Achalananda. He left behind a few disciples and grand disciples. His body was interred by his disciples with great pomp in a village near Kalighat.

1. Fifty is the number of letters in the Sanskrit alphabet.

2. *Ka* and *Kha* are the first two letters of the consonant series of the Sanskrit alphabet.—Tr.

1. Madhu Roy’s lane.

1. III. 3.10.

1. Gita VII. 7.

1. *Katha Upanishad,* I. ii. 5.

1. That is, “the greatest amongst the great scholars”.

1. *Mundaka Upanishad* III. i. 10 and III. ii. 1.

CHAPTER III
PILGRIMAGE OF THE MASTER AS THE GURU AND HIS COMPANY WITH THE HOLY MEN

> Know that all beings, that are great, prosperous and powerful,
> have for their origin a part of My power.
>
> —Gita X. 41

It is not in the power of man to record everything about the divine play of the Master (as the spiritual teacher established in Bhavamukha) enacted with so many people in so many places and in so many ways. We have already made a present of a little of it to the reader. It was also in accordance with the same mood that he went on pilgrimages. We shall now try to narrate them to the reader.

1. In comparison with the lives of other spiritual teachers, the Master's was novel and wonderful

As far as we saw, no action of the Master was aimless or useless. If we study even the very ordinary daily actions of his life, not to speak of the special events, they are found to be full of profound meaning. Again, in the modern age we have not seen a single life in the spiritual world so full of unusual occurrences. Man cannot attain the complete experience of any one of the innumerable aspects of God even by the practice of lifelong efforts and austerities, let alone his realizing Him and having visions of Him in various aspects, his direct perception, by dint of Sadhana, of all kinds of religious doctrines as true and his helping the aspirants in following all those doctrines and in going forward along their own paths. Far from

having any peer in the spiritual world, he stands out as one really unheard of. Each of the great souls of the ancient ages, the seers, the teachers and the divine incarnations resorted to the means of a particular spiritual mood, realized God thereby and proclaimed that to be the only path, leading to the vision of God. They had not the opportunity of knowing that God might be known through various other moods also. Or, they themselves might have realized that truth, more or less, but they did not publicly declare it, thinking that such preaching might undermine the firm faith and devotion of the people to their chosen Ideals and thereby thwart or harm their realization of spirituality. But, whatever may be the motive, history bears testimony to the fact that they preached as the Guru, narrow religious doctrines only, which became in course of time a perennial source of jealousy, hatred and even of bloodshed on many occasions.

That was not all. The narrow sectarian ideals gave rise to various doctrines contrary to one another and made the path to realization of God so intricate that it appeared impossible to the human intellect to disentangle that intricacy and have the vision of God, the Truth. Again, taking the time to be propitious, so to say, Western materialism, which regarded this worldly life and enjoyments as all in all, entered through education into India with irresistible force. It denied the minds of the boys and young men of impressionable intellect and flooded the country with those baneful foreign ideas and ideals of atheism and worldliness. Who can say how wide-spread that wretched condition would have become, had not religion been re-established by the advent of this extraordinary Master, a glowing example of purity, renunciation and love of God?

2. What the Master has proved in his life and what the scope of his liberal doctrine will be in future

He himself practised all religions and showed that none of the different aspects of God, which were realized in ancient ages, by the great souls, the seers, the teachers and the incarnations, born in India and abroad, and none of the various methods of knowing Him preached by them was false, but all were perfectly true; that the aspirant, who has faith, may become blessed by realizing God even today by proceeding like them along those paths; that,

although there existed a mountain-like wall of partition between the Hindus and the Muslims on account of mutually contradictory social manners, customs, etc., the religious faiths of both were true and, worshipping the same God in different ways and going forward along different paths, both of them would be, in course of time, one in love with Love Itself; that standing on the foundation of that truth alone, they would in course of time bind each other in the embrace of love, forget the age-long quarrels and attain peace; and that believing in the truth of the religious doctrines preached by the seers and the incarnations of India and of other countries including that preached by Jesus, the West, running headlong towards the enjoyment of pleasures, would realize in course of time that there was peace only in renunciation and become blessed by harmonizing its life of action with religion. The more we proceed with the study of the life of this wonderful Master, the more shall we see that he does not belong to any particular country, community, nation or religion. All the peoples of the world will have to take refuge in his liberal doctrine some day, for they cannot afford to forgo peace. Established in Bhavamukha, the Master will enter into all sects and groups in the form of those liberal ideas and, breaking asunder the limitations produced by all kinds of narrowness, will cast them in his new mould, will bind them together with a cord of unity never known before.

3. The proof thereof

That the aspirants of all the mutually contradictory and cantankerous religious denominations of India came to the Master, saw in him the perfect ideals of their own respective spiritual moods and were convinced that he was a traveller on their own particular path, is proof of what has been said above. The work of the spiritual teaching of the Master as the Guru, thus started in India for bringing about unity between the religious communities here, will not stop with the removal of the religious quarrels in this country or Asia alone but, overcoming slowly the lack of religion and the hatred thereof in Europe with a serene and tranquil step, it will establish all over the world a reign of peace never experienced before. Do you not notice how quickly this work has been proceeding since the passing away of the Master? Do you not notice, again, how the ideas of the Master have entered

America and Europe through the revered Swami Vivekananda, to whom his Guru was as dear as his life, and how they have, during this short period, produced a revolution in the thought-world? In the irresistible march of time, this unfailing body of ideas will spread its influence over all peoples, all religions and all societies and bring about a wonderful revolution. Who has the power to resist its progress? Who can withstand the influence of this body of ideas glowing with the benevolent power of unprecedented purity and austerity? The instruments, through which it is being spread at the present time, will be broken. Many will not perhaps be able to detach themselves and understand its source. But it is certain that all the peoples of the world will, in order to feel blessed, have to cast their lives in this mould, have carefully to cherish in their hearts this mass of ideas glowing with the serene light of infinite glory.

4. How to understand the spread of the Master's ideas

Therefore, do not, O reader, stop merely with reading, like tales, the facts just narrated about the aspirants of different religious denominations of India, who came to the Master and were blessed with the realization of true spirituality. Try first of all to grasp and understand as far as possible the mass of divine ideas of the extraordinary Master established in Bhavamukha and then, diving deep into these stories, see how the movement sprang up and developed and spread its influence at first over the people educated according to the old system, then over those educated in the new method, and afterwards, crossing the boundaries of India, entered into other countries, and produced a revolution in the thought-world.

5. The ideas and the ideals of the Master were first promulgated amongst the Sadhus of all communities, who came to Dakshineswar and who came in contact with him during his pilgrimage

The first spread of the mass of ideas of the Master took place amongst the aspirants of the various religious communities of India. Whenever the Master practised any particular doctrine and realized perfection in it, the followers of that very doctrine, as we said before, came to him of

themselves, saw in him their perfect ideal and got help from him before they left. Besides, at the request of Mathur Babu and the devout Jagadamba Dasi, his wife, the Master went on a pilgrimage up to Vrindavan. There is no lack of monks and devotees in places of pilgrimage like Kasi and Vrindavan. Therefore, it is not merely a guess-work of ours, but we had some indication of the fact from the Master himself, that eminent Sadhakas of those holy places met him and became blessed through the help of his power as the Guru. It is necessary to record here a little of what he said.

6. Passing through various states, high and low, in his life and having various experiences, the Master had an extraordinary power of spiritual teaching manifested in him

The Master said, "A piece has to move through all the squares before it reaches 'home'. When one experiences all the states from that of sweepers to that of emperors, and is really convinced of their worthlessness, one can be in the state of a real Paramahamsa, a true knower of Brahman." This is true so far as the realization of the ultimate knowledge by a particular aspirant himself is concerned. But, as regards what one should be like, if one were to become a real teacher of humanity, he used to say, "One can commit suicide with a nail-parer; but one requires a shield and a sword in order to kill another (to conquer an enemy)." If one is to become a true spiritual teacher, one has to pass through all kinds of experiences and become endowed with more power than the generality of people. The Master said to us again and again, "It is in the degree of power only that an incarnation of God, on the one hand, and a perfected man and Jiva, on the other, differ." Do you not see that, in the practical world of politics, geniuses like Bismarck and Gladstone have to keep an eye on the past and present history and events of their countries and develop foresight far more powerful than ordinary people? And it is because they do so that they can understand what prevailing ideas and movements would develop in a particular way and have a baneful influence and effect on the generality of the people of their country fifty years or more hence. So they set free counter forces which prevent those ideas from becoming powerful in course of time and bringing misery to their countries. It must be understood that

the case is the same in the spiritual world also. Incarnations, the true teachers, have to set afoot, before they pass away, new movements after a careful study and correct grasp and understanding of the spiritual ideas introduced in past ages by the ancient seers—what forms those ideas have assumed in the course of that long period; how much good or evil they have done and are doing to the people in general in their not-all-beneficent present forms; what causes have contributed to their degradation; what forms the new spiritual ideas prevalent in the country at the present time, when gradually vitiated, will assume some two centuries hence; and whether or not they will grow more harmful to the people. For if they cannot rightly grasp these things, how can they understand the present condition of people? And if they cannot rightly diagnose the disease, how can they prescribe the medicine? Therefore, besides acquiring the power of prescribing that medicine by practising intense austerities and the like, spiritual teachers have to pass through a great variety of conditions in the world and gain more experience than others. Do you not see, with how many kinds of states the Master had to be acquainted? Born in a poor cottage, he suffered intense poverty during his childhood, was appointed a priest in the Kali temple, passed through the mean condition of serving another during his youth and, absorbed in a search for God, met with harsh treatment from his relatives and became an object of pity and contempt for the worldly people who regarded him as mad, during the period of his Sadhana. Again, he experienced the respect worthy of a king when Mathur Babu entertained the greatest possible reverence for him and showed the intensest devotion to him; and he had the supreme splendour worthy of the gods when the aspirants of various denominations poured out their hearts' love and devotion at his lotus feet, knowing him to be an incarnation of God. Thus experiencing all these and numerous other states, he had to stand the test of remaining perfectly unperturbed under all those circumstances. Just as, on the one hand, his undivided divine love engaged him intensely in practising extraordinary austerities and opened his super-sensuous, subtle Yogic vision, so, on the other, his acquaintance with all those worldly states enabled him rightly to grasp and understand the mental attitudes of people under all circumstances in the gross external world, gave him his skill in dealing with them, and made him sympathize with all kinds of misery and happiness. For, it was through all these internal and external states that the

Master's power as the teacher was seen to blossom and manifest itself more and more every day.

7. What the Master learnt during his pilgrimage. Both natures, the divine and the human, were there in him

There is no doubt that similar results were produced in the life of the Master by his pilgrimages. It was necessary for the Master, the spiritual teacher of the age, to be acquainted with the spiritual condition of the generality of the people of the country. This need was, no doubt, met to a great extent through the pilgrimage he undertook with Mathur. For, the Master's eye of wisdom, which could always penetrate into all the veils of Maya and have a direct vision in the inward world of the One indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss without a second, the quintessence of all, made him in the everyday life of the external world, an expert in grasping the mental attitudes of people from a few casual words of theirs and in understanding the state of the country and society by the observation of a few events. It must, of course, be understood that we say this with respect to the Master's normal state of consciousness. But, when he ascended to higher planes through the power of Yoga and with the help of divine vision saw and understood the individual, social and regional conditions and fully ascertained the means by which their present plight might come to an end, he was beyond the necessity of knowing anything in the manner of ordinary people, who do so by observing things with the gross eye and comparing with other things. It was then not at all necessary for him to ascertain the truth about things in this manner. We saw the Master, the god-man, ascertain the truths about all things with the help of both the ordinary outward eye and the extraordinary Yogic vision. Therefore, if we cannot make the reader acquainted with the perfect manifestation in him of both the divine and the human aspects, a partial picture only of that divine character will be imprinted in the reader's mind. That is why we are making an effort to study the life of this god-man in both those aspects.

8. What the Sastras say about the reason why divine persons like the Master go on pilgrimage

Seen from the scriptural angle of vision, there is another reason why the Master went on a pilgrimage. The persons who have realized the goal of life by the attainment of the vision of God go, say the scriptures, to holy places of pilgrimage and enhance their quality of holiness. As they come and reside in those places with eager hearts to have special visions of God, they leave behind them either new manifestations of special aspects of God or enhance and illumine the previous manifestations already in existence there. So, when others come there, they experience easily a little at least of those aspects of God. This scriptural evidence is with regard to ordinary perfected souls; how much more powerful would be the influence of the incarnations of God like the Master? The Master explained to us on many occasions in his simple language what has been said before about holy places. He said, "Know for certain, my children, that there is God's manifestation where people have practised for a long time austerities, Japa, meditation, steady abstraction of mind, prayer and worship in order to have His vision. Their thoughts of God have become solidified there, so to speak, on account of their devotion; that is why holy thoughts and visions are so easily attained there. Numberless Sadhus, devotees and perfected souls came from age to age to these holy places in order to realize God, gave up all desires and called on Him with all their heart. So, there is a special manifestation of God in these places, though He is uniformly present everywhere, like water which is easily accessible in wells, pools, ponds or lakes, though it can be had in other places also, if one digs for it there."

9. The Master's advice to "chew the cud" after one visits temples and holy places

Again, the Master taught us to "chew the cud" after our visits to these places endowed with a special manifestation of God. He said, "Just as cows eat their fill, become free from anxiety and then, resting in one place, chew the cud, so after one has visited temples and places of pilgrimage, one should sit in a secluded place, think on and merge oneself in those pure thoughts of God that rose in the mind while one was in those places; one should not apply one's mind to sights, tastes and other worldly objects,

immediately after visiting them. Those thoughts of God do not, in that case, produce permanent results in the mind."

On one occasion, some of us accompanied the Master to Kalighat, to pay our obeisance to the Mother of the universe. It is superfluous to say that the special divine manifestation of the Pithasthana[1] and the living manifestation of the universal Mother, in the mind and body of the Master, combined to produce an extraordinary joy in the hearts of the devotees. On our way back, one of us had to go to his father-in-law's place in response to a special request and to spend that night there. On the morrow, when he came to the Master, he asked him where he had passed the previous night. And hearing that he had had to pass the night in the house of his father-in-law, he said, "Ah, what is this? You saw Mother and came back; what a great difference between 'chewing the cud' of the vision and thoughts of Her, which you ought, to have done, and passing the night like worldly people in your father-in-law's house instead! One should chew the cud, in other words, continue to cherish the thoughts that arise in one's mind in temples and holy places of pilgrimages. How can those divine thoughts stay in the mind otherwise?"

10. A devotional mood must be produced in the mind before one visits holy places

Again, the Master said to us on many occasions that one could not derive much benefit from visiting places of pilgrimage and other holy places without devoutly cherishing from beforehand holy thoughts in the mind. When he was living, many of us at different times expressed our desire to go on a pilgrimage, when he said to us affectionately, "One, who has it here (i.e., in the heart) has it there; one who has it not here, has it not there either."[1] He said further, "The devotional moods, when they exist in one's mind, get accentuated through association in places of pilgrimage; but what special benefit will one derive there if one has not got those moods in one's mind? Often it is said that so-and-so's son has fled to Kasi, or some other holy place; shortly after, he writes home that he somehow secured a job there and has sent some money. Again, many go to live in places of pilgrimage but start shops, business, etc., there. When I went with Mathur

to the north-western parts of India, I found that what was here was there also. The same mango trees, tamarind trees, clusters of bamboos, were there as here. I saw all that and said to Hridu, 'What, O Hridu, have I then come to see here? Whatever is there, is here. The only difference is that the power of digestion of the people of these parts seems to be greater than that of the people there, when one sees the ordure in the fields here.' "[2]

11. What the Master said to a devotee, anxious to visit Buddha-gaya when Swami Vivekananda had gone there

The devotees, we said before, brought the Master for the treatment of his throat-disease to a hired house at first at Shyampukur in Calcutta and afterwards to a garden house at Kasipur, a little to the north of that city. Accompanied by two of his co-disciples, Swami Vivekananda went away to Buddha-gaya without the knowledge of anybody a few days after the Master came to the Kasipur garden. At that time the study of the extraordinary life of Lord Buddha and conversation about his detachment from the world, his renunciation and austerity, were going on night and day amongst us. On the wall of the small room on the southern side of the ground floor of the garden house, which we always used, was written the verse from the *Lalitavistara,* indicative of the firm resolve of Buddha, "I will sit continuously on the same seat and practise meditation and steady abstraction of mind till truth is realized; let the body be destroyed in the attempt, if it is to be so." Flashing before our eyes day and night, these words always reminded us that we also would have to sacrifice our lives for the realization of God, who is of the nature of Truth. We also must follow the maxim:

Ihasane sushyatu me sariram twagasthimamsam pralayaneha yatu,

Aprapya bodhim bahukalpadurlabham, naivasanat kayamataschalishyate.[1]

Thus having had endless discussions on Buddha's detachment from the world, the Swami suddenly went away to Buddhagaya. But, he did not inform anyone where he would go or when he would return. So, we thought, he would not perhaps return to the world any more and we would not see him again. Word came afterwards that he had put on ochre-cloth and

gone to Buddhagaya. The minds of all of us were so much attracted towards the Swami that it was very painful for us to be without him even for an hour; therefore, the minds of many became restless and they felt a constant desire to join him there. Gradually news of this reached the Master's ears also. Knowing that resolve of one of us, one day Swami Brahmananda told the Master of it. The Master heard it and said to him, "Why are you anxious? Where can Naren go? How long can he be away? You will see he will come back very soon." Afterwards he said smiling, "Although you journey even to all the four corners of the world, you will find nothing (no true spirituality) anywhere. Whatever is there, is also here (showing his own body)." The word "here", it seems, was used by the Master in two senses: firstly, that the manifestation of religion and spirituality did not, at that time, exist anywhere else in such an especial manner as in himself; and secondly, that God existed within every one, and that if love for and devotion to Him within one could not be awakened, there was no benefit derived from travelling to various places outside. Two or more meanings are thus met with in many of the Master's words. Why speak of the Master alone? It is the same case with all the incarnations of God appearing in the world from age to age; and human beings in general accept one or two of those meanings according to their individual liking or past impressions. The person to whom the Master addressed the aforesaid words took them in the former meaning and, firmly convinced that the manifestation of spirituality was nowhere to be found in the same degree as it was in the Master, stayed with him with his mind free from anxiety. Swami Vivekananda also actually came back to Kasipur in a few days.

12. "One who has it here, has it there also"

At one time, a little before the passing away of the Master, a supremely devout woman devotee expressed to the Master her desire of going to Vrindavan and practising austerities and other religious exercises for some time. The Master, with a movement of his hand, said to her, "Ah! Why should you go? What can you do there? One who has it here, has it there and one who has it not here, has it not there either." The woman devotee could not accept those words of the Master on account of the attraction of

her heart for that place and bade good-bye to him. But, she, we were told by her, could not derive much benefit from the pilgrimage on that occasion. Besides, she lost the opportunity of being with the Master in his last days, since he passed away shortly after she went away on the pilgrimage.

13. The thought in the mind of the simple-hearted Master as to what he would find in places of pilgrimage

Many a time we were told by the Master, the embodiment of all spiritual moods, that his journeys to the holy places were undertaken with special mental attitudes. He used to say, "I thought, I would find every one in Kasi merged in Samadhi, in the meditation of Siva all the twenty-four hours; and all in Vrindavan beside themselves with devotion and divine love in the company of Govinda! But, when I was there I found everything quite the reverse." The extraordinary simple mind of the Master used to accept and believe everything like a five-year-old boy. We have learnt to view all persons and things with a suspicious eye from our childhood; how can that kind of simple faith arise in our crooked minds? We look upon a man as a foolish, half-witted person, when we see him believing anything straightway. It was from the Master that we heard for the first time, "My children, people become simple-minded and liberal as the result of many austerities and Sadhana; if one is not simple-minded, one cannot realize God. It is to these men of simple faith that He manifests His real nature." Again, lest anyone should think that one must be a simpleton to have sincere faith, he said, "You should become a devotee; but why should you be foolish on that account?" "Always", continued he, "discriminate in your mind between what is real and what is unreal, and what is eternal and what is transitory. And then give up what is transitory and fix your mind on the thing eternal."

14. The Master's instruction to Swami Yogananda. "You should be a devotee, but why should you be foolish on that account?"

Unable to harmonize these two statements, many of us got scolded by him now and again. Swami Yogananda had not then renounced the world.

He required an iron pan for his house and went to Barabazar to buy one. He reminded the shopkeeper of the evil consequences of irreligiousness and said, “Look here; take the just price and give me a good thing; see that it has no cracks or holes”. The shopkeeper, in his turn, said, “Rest assured, sir, I’ll of course do that”, and chose for him a pan and gave it to him. He believed in the words of the shopkeeper and brought it without examining it. But, when he came to Dakshineswar, he found that it was cracked! When the Master heard of this, he said, “How is that? You have bought the article, but why did you not examine it? The shopkeeper was there to conduct his business, not to practise religion. Why did you believe him and get deceived? You should no doubt be a devotee, but should you be foolish on that account? Should you be deceived by people? First examine whether the right thing has been given and then give the shopkeeper the price. See that the article does not weigh less than it should, before you receive it. Again, there are some articles for which it is customary for the sellers to give a little more than the quantity stipulated. Never neglect to take that extra quantity also.” Many such examples can be given. But this is not the place for them. Let us here mention only the Master’s extraordinary exercise of shrewdness, which co-existed with his wonderful simplicity, and resume our previous topic.

15. Seeing the worldly attachment of the inhabitants of Kasi, the Master complained, “Why hast Thou brought me here, Mother?”

Mathur spent, we were told by the Master, more than a lakh of rupees on that occasion of travelling to holy places. As soon as he came to Kasi, he gave cooked food away to Brahmin Pandits. Afterwards, one day he invited them together with their families, fed them their fill and gave each one of them as farewell present, a piece of cloth and a rupee. Again, when he came back to that place after visiting Vrindavan, he played one day the part of the “wish-fulfilling tree” at the injunction of the Master and gave to everybody whatever necessary articles he asked for—metal pots, cloth, blankets, sandals, etc. When the Master saw quarrels, tumults and even fighting amongst the Brahmins on the very first day on which cooked food was distributed, he was extremely annoyed. He was seized with despair when he

saw people attached to lust and gold in Varanasi as well as in other places. Dissolved in tears, he said to the divine Mother, “Why have you brought me here, Mother? I was happier at Dakshineswar.”

16. The Master’s vision of “golden Kasi”

Although the Master was thus pained to see worldly attachment even amongst the people living in holy places, he had extraordinary visions and other experiences there, and was firmly convinced of the glory of Siva and the greatness of Kasi. From the time when he entered Varanasi by boat, the Master saw, with his spiritual eye, that the city of Siva was actually made of gold, that there was actually nothing made of earth and stone there. It was indeed the manifestation, in the present, of the invaluable golden mass of spiritual emotions of the hearts of holy devotees, deposited stratum after stratum and solidified through ages, so to speak, into this city. That effulgent form, the embodiment of spiritual emotions, is its eternal nature. And what is seen outside is its shadow only.

17. Why Kasi is regarded as made of gold

It does not take much effort to understand, on the whole, the meaning of the phrase “the golden Varanasi”, with the help of our gross vision too. Who will not admit that, from very ancient times, all the parts of India combined to pour out incessant showers of gold to construct that wonderful city of Siva, when he sees in Kasi innumerable temples and big buildings, more than two miles on the bank of the Ganga paved with stone, numberless bathing-ghats with wide flights of steps, countless metalled roads, bedecked with gates, innumerable aqueducts, oblong or circular reservoirs of water, such as ponds, wells, etc., monasteries, gardenhouses, and, above all, many a place where there is the free distribution of food for the maintenance of Brahmin students, Sadhus and the poor? Who will not feel astounded to think that the heart-felt devotion of about three hundred million people of India has contributed for such a long time uniformly to bring about that external manifestation of the beautiful city? Who will not be charmed to see the irresistible force of this mighty current of spiritual feelings and will not

lose himself in an attempt to discover its origin? And who will not be wonderstruck and say with his head bent and heart melting with devotion, “This indeed is an incomparable creation. It is surely not manmade. It has actually been brought into existence by the infinite compassion of the divine Lord, the refuge of the humble and the deliverer of the afflicted.” And His Sakti Herself, in the form of Sri Annapurna, is for ever presiding here to nourish both the bodies of the Jivas, their gross bodies (formed by the assimilation of food) and the vital force, by the free distribution of food to them, and their subtle bodies, consisting of mind, intellect and bliss, by fully charging them with the power of spirituality, quickly bringing liberation to them, in other words, giving them the knowledge of their oneness with the divine Lord of the universe. It is, therefore, no wonder that, as soon as the Master, ever abiding in Bhavamukha, came here, he saw that celestial, golden current of spiritual emotions pervading the city of Siva and realized as golden that city, the solidified manifestation, so to speak, of that current.

18. The Master felt that Kasi was golden and was therefore, afraid to make it dirty

All luminous things, without exception, are, in the eyes of the Hindus, pure, made of Sattva Guna. All things derive their manifestation from light, which is, therefore, pure in our eyes. We can understand this from the Sastras which prescribe the placing of the Jyotpradipa, the sacrificial lamp, near the deities, and forbid the putting out of lights before them and so on. It is perhaps owing to this principle that we have been enjoined to look upon bright things like gold etc., as pure, and forbidden to wear gold ornaments about the lower part of the person. Seeing that Varanasi was golden, the boy-like Master was at first worried to think that the gold would be soiled if he were to answer nature’s calls there. We heard from the Master himself that Mathur arranged a palanquin to take the Master across the small stream, Asi, to answer calls of nature beyond it. When afterwards that mood of his came to an end, he had not to do so any more.

19. The Master's vision at Manikarnika that Jivas are liberated as soon as they die in Kasi

We were told by the Master of another especial vision of his in Kasi. Many people take a trip on the Ganga by boat to see the five holy places, Manikarnika and the others. Accompanied by the Master, Mathur took a similar trip. The main burning-ghat of Kasi is situated near Manikarnika. When Mathur's boat came to the Manikarnika-ghat, it was seen to be full of smoke rising from funeral pyres; dead bodies were being burnt there. As soon as he happened to cast his eyes in that direction, the Master, the embodiment of spiritual emotions, was completely beside himself with joy and the hairs of his body stood on end. He walked quickly out of the covered portion of the boat, stood on the very verge of it and entered into Samadhi. The guides of Mathur, the boatmen, and others of the crew, ran to catch hold of him lest he should fall down into the water and be carried away by the current. But that was not necessary for he was seen to be standing calm and quiet, absolutely motionless; and a wonderful light and smile illumined his face and made that place pure and effulgent, as it were. Hriday and Mathur, stood carefully beside the Master. The crew stood at a distance and viewed the strange mood of the Master with an astonished eye. When, some time afterwards, that divine mood of the Master came to an end, all got down into Manikarnika, bathed, made gifts and performed other ceremonies that were to be performed there, before they went elsewhere by boat.

The Master then described his wonderful vision to Mathur and others. He said, "I saw a tall, white person with tawny matted hair walking with solemn steps to each pyre in the burning-ghat, raising carefully every Jiva and imparting into his ear the Mantra of supreme Brahman. On the other side of the pyre, the all-powerful Mahakali was untying all the knots of bondage, gross, subtle and causal of the Jiva produced by past impressions and sending him to the indivisible sphere by opening with Her own hands the door to liberation. Thus did Visvanatha, the divine Lord of the universe, endow him in an instant with the infinite Bliss of experiencing non-duality, which ordinarily results from the practice of Yoga and austerity for many cycles. Thus did He fulfil the perfection of the Jiva's life."

The Pandits, well versed in the scriptures, who were with Mathur, heard of the aforesaid vision and said to the Master, “It is written in general in the *Kasikhanda,* that if a Jiva died here, the Lord of the universe granted him Nirvana, the state of infinite Bliss; but it is not written in detail how He granted it. From your vision it is clear how it is accomplished. Your visions and experiences have gone beyond even what is recorded in the scriptures.”

20. The Master saw Trailanga Swami

While he was staying in Kasi, the Master went to pay visits to the famous holy men there. He was much pleased to see Trailanga Swami, who was one of them. He spoke many things about the Swami occasionally. He said, “I saw that the universal Lord Himself was using his body as a vehicle for His manifestation. Kasi was illumined by his stay there. He was in an exalted state of Knowledge. There was no body-consciousness in him. Sand there became so hot in the sun that no one could set foot on it, but he lay comfortably on it. I cooked rice porridge, took it with me to him and fed him with it. He did not speak then, as he had taken a vow to remain silent. I asked him by a sign whether God was one or more. In reply he hinted that, when one was in Samadhi, one knew Him as one; otherwise, as long as there was the knowledge of diversity, such as I, you, the Jiva, the universe, etc., He was many. Pointing at him, I said to Hridu, ‘This is what is called the true state of a Paramahamsa.’ ”

21. The Master was in Bhavasamadhi to see the image of Vankavihari and pastures in Vrindavan

After a short stay at Kasi, the Master went to Vrindavan with Mathur Babu. He, it is said, was in a wonderful Bhavasamadhi to see the image of Vankavihari—he lost himself and ran to, embrace Him. When he saw cowherd boys returning from pastures and crossing the Yamuna with herds of cattle at sunset, he became filled with spiritual emotion, inasmuch as, among them, he had the vision of the cowherd Krishna, dark-blue like a newly formed cloud and bedecked with the feathers of a peacock’s tail on his head. The Master visited Nidhuvan, Govardhan and a few other places

of Vraja. He liked these places more than Vrindavan. Having various visions of Sri Krishna and Sri Radha, the supreme lady of Vraja, he felt intense divine love in those places. Mathur, it is said, sent him by a palanquin to go and see places such as Govardhan. On one side of the palanquin he spread a piece of cloth on which he piled in stacks rupees, half-rupees, quarter-rupees, two-anna-pieces, etc., so that the Master might give them away to the poor and to the places of worship. But the Master became so much filled with spiritual love and affection while he was going to those places, that he could not take them in his hand to give them away. Having no alternative left, he pulled one end of the piece of cloth and scattered them amongst the poor people of those places.

22. The Master's intense love for Vraja

In those places of Vraja, the Master saw many world-renouncing Sadhakas sitting within Kupas[1] with their backs to the doors and immersed in Japa and meditation by withdrawing their eyes from outward things. The Master's mind was much attracted by the natural and other beauties of Vraja, adorned with fruits and flowers, the small hillock, Govardhan, deer and peacocks, free from fear, roaming everywhere in the forests, the holy men engaged in austerity and spending their days in incessant thought of God, and the inhabitants of Vraja, whose behaviour was simple, sincere and respectful. Besides, at Nidhuvan, the Master was much charmed to see Gangamata, a perfected lover of God, an aged lady of great austerity. He enjoyed her company so much that he thought he would not leave Vraja and go anywhere else, but spend the rest of his life there.

23. Gangamata of Nidhuvan. The Master's desire to live there. He returned to Calcutta when he asked himself, who would serve his old mother

Gangamata was then about sixty years old. Seeing her overwhelmed with spiritual love in her constant relationship with Radha and Krishna for a very long time, the people of that place regarded her as Radha's principal companion, Lalita, who had assumed a body for some reason or other and

come down on earth to teach Jivas divine love. As soon as she saw him, she, we heard from the Master himself, could recognize the signs of Mahabhava, the great mood, manifested in the Master's body like those in Radhika's. She, therefore called him Dulali, the darling friend, thinking Radhika had incarnated Herself as the Master and come down on earth. Gangamata considered herself blessed in having the privilege of meeting "the darling friend" without seeking him and thought that her long heart-felt service and love had borne fruit that day. The Master also forgot everything else when he met her and, as one long familiar with her, lived in her hermitage for some time. They were so much charmed with each other's affection that Mathur and the others, we were told, were afraid lest he should refuse to return to Dakshineswar with them. We can well infer how anxious Mathur, who was so very obedient to the Master, became, on account of that thought. But the filial love of the Master towards his mother became victorious after all, and conquered his resolve of remaining at Vraja. The Master said to us in this connection, "I forgot everything when I went to Vraja. I thought I would no more return here. But, a few days later, I remembered my mother. I thought she would be in difficulty—who would look after her and serve her in that old age? That thought arose in the mind and made it impossible for me to live there."

24. A wonderful harmony in the Master's life, of ideas and of qualities contrary to one another. Although a Sannyasin, the Master served his mother

The more we think the more do the words and actions of this extraordinary person appear wonderful indeed, and the more amazed we are to see the unprecedented harmony in him of apparently contradictory qualities. Do you not see that, although he offered everything, body, mind, etc., at the lotus feet of the universal Mother he could not offer truthfulness to Her. Although he gave up worldly relation with all persons, he could not forget his affection and duty to his mother. And although he never retained the slightest tinge of carnal relationship with his wife, he never forgot always to maintain, in the mood of the Guru, a loving relationship with her. Ah, how many are the examples that can be given of his extraordinary

actions! Who are the teachers, or incarnations of God, of past ages, in whose lives so many contradictions meet in such sweet harmony? Who will not say that such a harmony was never seen anywhere else? One may not take him as an incarnation of God, but, can one find a parallel in the spiritual world, search as diligently as one may? His aged mother, we heard from the Master himself many a time, lived the last few years of her life at Dakshineswar under his care when he performed daily with his own hand all kinds of service to her and considered himself blessed. Again, when his adorable mother passed away, great was the Master's grief and he was seen to shed such profuse tears in sorrow as very few in the world are seen to do. But, although he was so much grieved at the death of his mother, the Master never for a moment forgot that he was a Sannyasin. He had the obsequies and funeral ceremonies of his mother performed by his nephew Ramlal, as he, being a Sannyasin, was precluded by the scriptural injunctions from performing them and he himself sat in a secluded place and paid off, as far as possible, his debt to his mother by weeping for her. The Master said to us about this on many occasions. "In the world, O children, the parents are worthy of supreme veneration; they should be served, according to one's power, as long as they live, and after their death their funeral ceremonies should be performed according to one's means. One, who is poor, and has no resources to perform them with, should go to the forest, remember the parents and weep; it is in this way alone that the debt due to them is paid off. It is only for the sake of God that one may disobey one's parents; one does not incur any blemish thereby. Prahlada, though forbidden by his father, did not give up taking the name of Krishna; and Dhruva, though forbidden by his mother, went to the forest to practise austerities; and they did not incur any blemish on that account." We felt blessed to see the wonderful manifestation of the Master's power as the spiritual teacher of people through his filial devotion to his mother in this way.

25. The Master refused to go to Gaya, the abode of Gadadhar, knowing that he would be in Samadhi there and have to part with his body. The reason for this

The Master bade good-bye to Gangamata with difficulty and returned to Kasi with Mathur. He lived there a few days when, on the occasion of the Dipavali, the new moon night of illumination, he saw the golden image of Sri Annapurna and was beside himself with love and devotion. Mathur had a desire to pay a visit to Gaya from Kasi. But the Master dissented and Mathur gave up that desire when the Master's father had come to Gaya, the abode of Gadadhar, he, we were told by the Master himself, had come to know in a dream that Gadadhar would be born in his family. And that was why, when the Master was born, he was named Gadadhar. He sometimes said to us that he refused to go to Gaya with Mathur lest, when he saw the lotus feet of Gadadhar there, he should become overwhelmed with love, completely forget to live in a body separate from Him, and unite with Him for all time to come. It was the firm conviction of the Master that the One who, in past ages had incarnated Himself as Rama, Krishna, Gauranga and others, had come down to the world in his own person. Therefore, there arose in him, we observed, an indescribable feeling at the talk of his going to Gaya, the place of the origin of his body and mind as known from his father's dream, mentioned before. He had also a similar feeling about visiting the places where other incarnations of God had brought to an end their divine play. The Master said that, if he went to those places, he would enter into such a profound absorption that his mind would not come down from there back to the sphere of mortals. The Master expressed a similar feeling, on another occasion, at the proposal of his going to Puri, otherwise called Nilachala, where the divine sport of Gauranga had ended. It was not a feeling regarding himself alone. When he knew through Yogic vision, that any one of the devotees was a part or a manifestation of a particular deity, he expressed that kind of feeling regarding him also at the proposal of his going to the particular place of the divine play of that deity, and forbade his going there. It is difficult to explain to the reader that feeling of the Master. It is not reasonable to call it "fear", for, even those ordinary persons who experience ecstasy in their lives recognize how at death the soul merely leaves the body, and become, thereupon, free from fear, knowing death to be a particular transition like any one of the physical transitions from one stage to another such as childhood, youth, etc. So, it is no wonder that the incarnations of God, able to enter into profound ecstasy at will, conquer death and become absolutely fearless. Neither can we call it an eagerness to

live or to have the body saved, such as people in general have. For, it is for the purpose of having selfish pleasure or enjoyment that the generality of people express that eagerness. This explanation cannot be applicable to those from whose mind selfishness has for ever been washed off. How then can we explain the aforesaid feeling of the Master? Words are our instruments; that is, they are there to express the ideas that rise in our minds. Where is the power in those words to express the very exalted divine ideas in the minds of great souls like the Master? We have therefore, O reader, no alternative but to give up the idea of argumentation, to listen with faith to the exact words in which the Master described them and try, as far as possible with the help of imagination, to paint pictures of those exalted ideas in our minds.

26. It is the law that the effect merges in the cause

The Master said, and there are many examples of it in the scriptures, that a manifestation arising from a place, thing or person would merge into that wherefrom it originated when it happened to come very near it. The Jivas owe their origin or manifestation to Brahman; when they acquire right knowledge and approach It, they merge into It. The limited minds, of you, me and all other individuals have originated from the infinite Mind, in other words, they are the manifestation of that Mind. If the little mind of any one of us grows in purity, compassion, non-attachment and other noble qualities and approaches that infinite Mind, that is, becomes similar, it merges into It. This is the law in the gross world also. The earth has come out of the sun, into which it will immediately merge if it approaches it (the sun), drawn by some force or other. It must, therefore, be understood that, behind that conviction of the Master, there is a particular feeling unknown to us. And, if there actually exists a Thing or a Person called Sri Gadadhar, and if the mind and body of the Master had, for some reason or other, originated or manifested itself from Him, what was there irrational in the faith that, attracted towards each other on account of love, they would unite again when the approach was close enough?

27. The law of Karma cannot solve the mystery of the life of an incarnation. The reason therefor

No inference or reasoning is necessary to explain that the lives of incarnations are not like those of ordinary men. Seeing in them the manifestation of unthinkable, unimaginable power, men's heads are bent down in reverence to them; they offer their heart-felt worship and take refuge in them. The Philosophers of India, like the great Rishi Kapila and other geniuses, made the utmost effort to pierce the mystery of the lives of those extraordinary, powerful personages. Trying to ascertain what led to such a vastly greater manifestation of power in them than in ordinary people, they saw at the very outset that the law of Karma, common to all, was quite inappropriate to solve the mystery. For, it is in search of their own selfish pleasures that ordinary people perform good and bad actions. But, when the actions of those other persons are studied, that motive is seen to have been absolutely lacking. The desire to remove the misery of others produced in them an irresistible effort therefor and at the altar of that desire they completely sacrificed all their own enjoyment and pleasures. Again, it was also seen that the quest for honour, for name and fame in the world, never nourished the root of that desire. For, it was always their habit to give up in all respects the desire to attain higher worlds and worldly honour, which they shunned as they would the droppings of crows. Do you not see that the two Rishis, Nara and Narayana, spent ages in practising austerity in the hermitage of Badarika, in order to ascertain the means to do good to humanity? Ramachandra banished even Sita, dear to Him as His life, so that His subjects might be happy. Krishna performed each action of His with a view to establishing truth and religion. Buddha renounced the wealth of a king so that he might deliver men from the pain arising from birth, old age, death, etc. Jesus gave up His life on the cross, so that the kingdom of Heaven might come down to this world of grief and misery, that the realm of love of the Father in Heaven, who was Love Itself, might prevail over hatred, jealousy and bloodshed. It was against irreligion that Mohammad took up the sword. Sankara applied all his powers to explain to men that true peace consisted in the realization of non-duality. And, knowing that all the power conducive to the good of men lay in the name of Hari alone, Chaitanya renounced worldly pleasures and enjoyment and dedicated his

life to the preaching of the name of Hari through loud singing and unrestrained dancing. What selfishness impelled them to perform all those actions, what pleasure attracted them to undergo such sufferings?

28. Conclusions drawn by Indian philosophers when they saw the signs of liberated persons manifested in incarnations from childhood. Incarnations belong, according to the Sankhya philosophy, to the class of persons "merged in Prakriti"

The signs spoken of in the scriptures and admitted to be produced in the bodies of persons liberated-in-life, owing to extraordinary feelings experienced by them, were, the philosophers found, clearly manifested in the lives of incarnations too. They were, therefore, forced to regard them as belonging to a new class. Kapila, the author of the Sankhya, said that they had in their minds a kind of very generous desire to do good to humanity. Therefore, though already liberated through the power of austerity practised in their past lives, they did not dwell in the state of Nirvana, infinite Bliss. They merged in Prakriti; in other words, they spent the period of a cycle, knowing that all the powers of Prakriti were theirs. And, therefore, that one among that class who knew himself possessed of such powers in any particular cycle, appeared to the people in general to be Isvara during that period. For, any one who knew all the powers of Prakriti as his, would be able to apply or withdraw those powers at will. Just as we can use all the powers of Prakriti that exist in our limited bodies and minds only because we know them as ours, so can they use all its powers at will inasmuch as they know them as belonging to themselves. Although Kapila does not admit the existence of an eternal Isvara, he has admitted the existence of all-powerful persons each of whom exists for a cycle, and called them Prakriti-lina Purushas, i.e., persons merged in Prakriti.

29. The Vedanta calls these persons the Adhikarikas or persons authorized. And according to it, there are, in this class of persons, two divisions, the incarnations of God and the eternally free Isvarakotis

Again, the authors of the Vedanta admit the eternal existence of the only Person called Isvara and accept that He exists manifested as the Jivas and the universe. They are, therefore, of the opinion that those extraordinary, powerful persons are born of especial parts of Isvara, who is by nature eternally pure, eternally awakened and eternally free. That is not all; but each of those persons is born, as the world's needs demand, for a particular purpose conducive to the good of humanity. As he comes down on earth possessed of the necessary powers to accomplish his mission, he is called in the Vedanta an "Adhikarika," a person entrusted with a mission and possessed of the "Adhikara" the authority, to accomplish it. Again, seeing a higher and a lower manifestation of power in these persons and observing that the actions of some of them are performed for the permanent good of all the people of the whole world and those of others for the people of one country or a part of it only, the authors of the Vedanta have recognized the former as incarnations of God and the latter as eternally free Isvarakotis endowed with less authority. With this opinion of the authors of the Vedanta as the basis, the authors of the Puranas afterwards came forward in their effort to ascertain, with the help of imagination, how large a part of God each one of the incarnations was, and made a little too much of their business of calculation: the author of the *Bhagavata* wrote such verses as, "These are one-sixteenth or smaller parts of the all-pervading One, but Krishna is the divine Lord Himself."

We have already tried to explain to the reader[1] that the Power of the Guru is that of God Himself. Finding the Jiva who has fallen into delusion produced by ignorance, unable to overcome it by his personal efforts, He Himself becomes, on account of His infinite mercy, eager to deliver him from it. The compassionate eagerness of God and the efforts born thereof are what are called Sri Guru and his Gurubhava or Power of spiritual teaching. The Power, the Guru, has been manifesting Itself now and again to us in the forms of especial human beings from time immemorial, so that the people in general might grasp and understand It. It is these persons that are being worshipped by the world as the incarnations of God. It is, therefore, clear that these persons, the incarnations of God, are the true Gurus of humanity.

30. The bodies and minds of Adhikarikas are made of materials different from those of ordinary people. This is why their desires and actions are also different from those of others and are so astonishing to us

Therefore, the bodies and the minds of Adhikarika persons are seen to be made of such stuff as enables them to hold and retain the divine love and devotion and to manifest the powers of higher planes, quite naturally and without any sense of elation. The Jiva becomes egoistic and is beside himself with joy when he gets a little of spiritual power and respect from people. But the Adhikarika persons do not get at all unsettled or have their power of discrimination destroyed or become egoistic, even if they get those powers a thousandfold. The Jiva never likes to return to the world for any reason whatever if, being free from all kinds of bondage, he can somehow attain, in Samadhi, the knowledge of the Self. But as soon as the Adhikarika persons feel this bliss, there arises in their minds the question how they can share it with others. After the realization of God the Jiva has no duty whatever left. But it is only after that realization that the Adhikarika persons grasp and understand the especial purpose for which they were born and begin to accomplish it. Therefore, the law regarding Adhikarika persons is that, until they execute the specific mission for which they are born, there never arises in their minds, as does in the mind of ordinary, liberated persons, the attitude that if the body is to drop, it might well be allowed to drop without any harm; but, rather, there is seen in them an eagerness to live in this sphere of the mortals. But there is, it is seen, a tremendous difference between the will to live of the incarnations and that of the Jivas. Moreover, the Adhikarika persons know when it is that their mission has been executed and delightfully give up their bodies in Samadhi without remaining for a second more in the world. A Jiva cannot even know when the duties of his life would come to an end, let alone the power of giving up his body at will in Samadhi. Rather, he feels that many desires remain unfulfilled in this life of his. There are similar differences between them in all other respects also. Therefore we shall be falling into a great error if we try to judge the purpose and actions of the lives of incarnations by our own standard.

The aforesaid views of the scriptures must be understood a little by the reader if he wants at all to understand the sayings of the Master, “The body will cease to live if I go to Gaya”, “An eternal Samadhi will result if I visit Puri”, and so on. That is why we have discussed the subject here very briefly. The reader will have also understood from the above discussion that no mood of the Master is without scriptural authority.

The Master, we said before, refused to go to Gaya with Mathur. Therefore, no one could visit that holy place during that trip. All returned to Calcutta via Vaidyanath. It was at Vaidyanath that, seeing the poverty of the people of a certain neighbouring village, the Master, when the party was going towards Kasi, was filled with compassion and Mathur, in accordance with his wish, fed them to their fill one day, and gave each of them a piece of cloth. We have mentioned the incident in detail in another place.[1]

31. The Master visited Navadwip

Besides visiting the places of pilgrimage like Kasi, Vrindavan, etc., the Master at one time went to Navadwip, the birthplace of Chaitanya, the great lord. Mathur Babu took the Master with him there also. From what the Master told us on one occasion about Gauranga, it is clear that all truths do not always remain revealed even to the minds of incarnations of God. But, whatever truth of the spiritual world they want to know and understand, comes very easily within the range of their mind and intellect.

32. The previous opinion of the Master about Chaitanya, the great lord, and the change of that opinion after having his vision at Navadwip

Many among us were then sceptical about Gauranga being an incarnation of God, so much so, that the word “Vaishnava”, meant for us but the low class people. They also questioned the Master about it in order to remove their doubt. In reply, the Master said to us, “I also had that attitude formerly; I thought, ‘How could Chaitanya be an incarnation as there was not the slightest mention of it in the *Bhagavata* and other Puranas? The shaven-headed Vaishnavas have set him up to be an incarnation.’ I could never believe that. I went to Navadwip with Mathur. I thought that if he

were an incarnation, there must linger there a little at least of the manifestation; I shall understand it when I see it. In order to detect even a little manifestation (of divinity) I took walks hither and thither—to the house of the senior Gosain, to that of the junior Gosain and so on; but I saw nothing particular anywhere; everywhere I found a wooden figure standing with its arms raised upward! I felt dejected to see it. I regretted my going there. Afterwards, I was going to step into the boat for my return trip when I saw a wonderful vision: Two beautiful boys of tender age,—I never saw such beauty; they had the complexion of molten gold—each having a halo of light round his head, raising their hands and looking at me, were running towards me through the sky. And I cried out immediately, 'There they come, there they come.' Scarcely had I uttered these words before they came and entered here (his own body); I lost normal consciousness and fell down. I would have fallen into the water but for Hridu who was beside me and caught hold of me. I was shown many such things convincing me of their really being incarnations, the manifestations of the divine power." The Master said many such things. One day he told us of his vision[1] of Gauranga's Sankirtan in the streets of the town. We have mentioned it elsewhere in this book. Repetition is unnecessary.

33. The Master went to Kalna

Besides going to the holy places named above, the Master once went to Kalna with Mathur Babu. Many villages of Bengal on the Ganga have become places of pilgrimage because of the touch of the feet of Gauranga, the great lord. Kalna is one of them. Again, every visitor, without exception, has felt that the glorious acts, like the setting up of one hundred and eight Siva temples by the family of the prince of Burdwan, have made Kalna a place of pomp and splendour. But, the Master had a different purpose in going to Kalna this time. His intention was to see Bhagavan Das, the respected Vaishnava "father", the well-known Sadhu of that place.

34. The renunciation, devotion and fame of Bhagavan Das

Bhagavan Das, the respected Vaishnava "father" was then probably more than eighty years old. It is not known to us what family he sanctified by his birth. But his glowing renunciation, dispassion and devotion to God were known to a great many of the men, women and children of Bengal. Both his legs, it is said, became paralysed in the last stage of his life on account of his sitting day and night, in the same posture, at the same place practising Japa, austerity, meditation, etc. But although he was more than eighty years old and had become disabled for any work and almost destitute of the power of getting up, his great zeal in taking the name of Hari and shedding incessant tears of joy enjoying the bliss of divine love, did not decrease; rather it increased day after day. The Vaishnava community of that place had much of spiritual life infused into them on account of his company. Many of the Vaishnava holy men of renunciation got the opportunity of shaping their own lives after his bright example and according to his instruction. Whoever, it is said, came to pay a visit to the "father" at that time, felt in his heart of hearts the accumulated influence of his long practice of austerity, purity, devotion and renunciation, and enjoyed an extraordinary bliss before he returned. The people there took all his opinions on Sri Chaitanya's religion of love to be infallible and engaged themselves in carrying them into practice. Therefore, the perfected "father" did not then keep himself engaged in his own Sadhana only, but spent much time in discussing and making practical what would conduce to the welfare of the Vaishnava community, what would lead the Vaishnavas who had chosen renunciation, to the right practice of it and make them blessed, and what would make the worldly people in general take refuge in the religion of love preached by Sri Chaitanya and make them attain Peace. People used to bring to the notice of the "father" whatever happened in any part of the Vaishnava community, such as the good or bad conduct of Sadhus in any place. He heard and reflected on them and gave instruction as to what should be done. There is always an invisible firm bond in the realm of renunciation, austerity and love; people obeyed the words of the "father" most submissively and would of themselves hasten to act accordingly. Although he had no spies, the keen eye of the perfected "father" fell on everything done everywhere in the Vaishnava community; and every person of that community felt his influence. While, on the one hand, the ardour of those of simple faith increased day by day under that protecting vision and

influence, the insincere, on the other hand, felt a sort of unknown fear and, shrinking into themselves, tried to change their own nature.

35. Religious movements in India during the period of the Master's Sadhana

Important religious movements, as we have mentioned, were going on in many parts of the modern India when, under the intense urge of divine love, the Master engaged himself in severe austerities for twelve years for the realization of God and a wonderful power as the spiritual teacher was beginning to be manifested in him. The movements of the Hari-sabhas and the Brahmo Samaj in Calcutta and various places near it, the propagation of the "Vedic religion" by Swami Dayananda in the Punjab and the north-western part of India which has become famous later as the Arya Samaj, the movements of the pure Vedanta, of the Kartabhaja and the Radhasyami sects in Bengal and that of Narayana Swami in Gujarat—all these religious movements were founded and carried on shortly before and after that time. It is not our intention to discuss here in detail these movements and doctrines. We shall describe to the reader only one event about the Master in a Hari-sabha, situated at Kalutola in Calcutta.

36. The Master went to the Harisabha at Kalutola

One day the Master was invited and he went to that Hari-sabha. Hriday, his nephew, accompanied him. Some say that Pandit Vaishnavacharan, whom we have mentioned before, was engaged in reading and explaining the *Bhagavata* there that day and the Master went there to listen. But we do not remember to have heard the circumstances from the Master himself. Be that as it may, the reading was going on and all were absorbed in listening to it when the Master arrived there. The Master sat amongst the audience and was listening to the reading.

37. The reading of the Bhagavata in that Sabha

The members of that Hari-sabha regarded themselves as having absolutely taken refuge at Sri Chaitanya's holy feet. And, in order to remember constantly this fact, they spread a seat and, assuming the presence of the great lord on it, carried on before it worship, reading and all the other activities of the Sabha. That seat was called "the seat of Sri Chaitanya." All devoutly made salutations to him in front of that seat. They never allowed anybody to sit on it. The reading was being done in front of that seat decorated with garlands of flowers, etc., that day as on all other days. The reader was reading devoutly, thinking that he was doing it for the great lord, and the listeners rejoiced to think that they were sitting in his divine Presence and were blessed with drinking the nectar of Hari's words. The joy and the devotional mood of the reader and the listeners became, it is superfluous to say, intensified a hundredfold on the arrival of the Master.

38. The Master occupied "the seat of Sri Chaitanya"

The Master lost himself listening to the nectar-like words of the *Bhagavata.* He ran towards the seat of Sri Chaitanya, stood on it and entered into so profound a Samadhi that not even the slightest movement of the vital force was observable in him. Seeing that extraordinary loving smile on his effulgent face and the upward pointing of his finger in his uplifted hand, as in the images of Sri Chaitanya, eminent devotees felt in their heart of hearts that the Master in Bhavamukha had become completely identified with the great lord—that, having ascended to a higher plane of consciousness, viz., that of Bhavamukha, he was not then at all conscious of the great distance of time, place and other things which, in gross eyes, separated his bodily and mental existence from those of Sri Chaitanya. The reader forgot to read and was motionless, looking at him; although unable to grasp and understand the Bhavasamadhi of the Master, the listeners also became overwhelmed with an indescribable, extraordinary awe and astonishment and remained calm and charmed. Nobody could then say anything, good or bad. Experiencing an indescribable bliss for the time being, all felt that they were carried away, so to speak, by the powerful current of the Master's spiritual mood to an indefinable realm. They did not at first know what to do, but later, impelled by that indescribable feeling,

they raised a chorus of the loud shout of “Hari” and began singing His name. When discussing[1] the nature of Samadhi, we have already said that the mind depended, for coming down from Samadhi and becoming conscious of the external world, on that particular name of God by which it realised an infinite divine mass of ideas at the time of entering. We daily observed this over and over again in the Master. While he heard the name of Hari sung, the Master became a little conscious of his own body. Filled with love and devotion, he then mixed with those who were singing in a chorus and sometimes danced charmingly in an unrestrained way and sometimes remained motionless in ecstasy on account of the excess of spiritual emotion. The zeal of all present increased a hundredfold owing to that behaviour of the Master. They became inebriated and began singing Kirtan. Who was then to judge whether it was right or wrong for the Master to occupy the seat of Sri Chaitanya? After singing the noble qualities of Sri Hari and of “the great lord” accompanied by unrestrained dancing for a long time, all cried out “Victory to the divine Lord” and brought that divine sport to a close for that day. The Master returned to Dakshineswar shortly afterwards.

39. A commotion over it arose in the Vaishnava community

Although people’s natural tendency to pick holes in others became benumbed for some time when they reached a plane of higher spiritual emotion through the divine influence of the Master’s singing of the name of Hari and unrestrained dancing, all of them resumed their normal fault-finding attitude, like the mouse of the fable Punar-mushika, when the Master came away from that place. That is indeed the defect of all the religions that neglect knowledge and teach the aspirants for God-realization to depend on devotion alone. Though the travellers on the paths of those religions reach very easily high blissful states of spiritual moods for some time through singing the name of Sri Hari and other such devotional exercises, they come down the next moment to correspondingly low states of consciousness. They are not much to blame for it: for, it is the nature of the body and mind, the evolutes of Prakriti, to lapse into lassitude after stimulation. It is the law of nature that depressions follow crests or ridges

and lassitude follows stimulation. Now, during the depression after that high current of spiritual mood, the members of the Hari-sabha also came under the influence of their own previous nature and impressions and busied themselves in criticizing the Master's action. One party vindicated the Master's occupying the seat of Sri Chaitanya in Bhavamukha and the other party engaged themselves in making strong protests. There was a great quarrel between the parties. But they arrived at no conclusion.

This controversy spread gradually from mouth to mouth everywhere in the Vaishnava community. Bhagavan Das also heard of it. That was, however, not the only thing that mattered; but, apprehensive lest, feigning divine emotion, selfish and cunning hypocrites, desirous of name and fame, should similarly occupy that seat, some of the members of the Hari-sabha went to him to ascertain how it might be prevented in future.

40. Bhagavan Das became annoyed to hear of the occupation of "the seat of Sri Chaitanya"

The perfected "father", who had taken refuge at the feet of Sri Chaitanya, was very much annoyed ,on hearing of the occupation of the seat of his own chosen Ideal by the unknown Ramakrishna, and blinded by anger, he did not hesitate to call him names and even to describe him as a hypocrite. The annoyance and anger of the "father", we can easily understand, now doubled to see the members of the Harisabha and he scolded them saying that they were culpable in having allowed that improper action to be done in their presence. When, afterwards, his anger abated, the "father" determined what arrangement should be made in order that none might behave similarly in future. But, he who was the occasion of all that commotion could not know much of it.

41. The Master went to the hermitage of Bhagavan Das

A few days after that event had taken place, Sri Ramakrishna, of his own accord, went to Kalna with Mathur Babu and Hriday. When the boat reached the Ghat very early in the morning, Mathur became busy with arrangements for board and lodging. Sri Ramakrishna, in the meantime,

went out with Hriday to see the town and, ascertaining the "father's" address from people, approached his hermitage.

42. Hriday told the "father" about the Master

When he was to go to the presence of an unknown person, it very often happened that the childlike Master at first felt an indescribable fear, shyness, etc. We have observed that mood of his many a time. That was the case also when he was going to see the "father". Asking Hriday to go ahead, he covered almost his whole body from head to foot with a piece of cloth and followed him to the hermitage. Gradually Hriday went up to the "father", saluted him and said, "My maternal uncle loses himself in the name of God. He has been experiencing that state for a long time. He has come to pay a visit to you."

43. The "father" was annoyed at the action of a certain Sadhu

Hriday says that, as soon as he approached him, he became acquainted with a power of the "father" born of his Sadhana. For, before he had spoken the aforesaid words after saluting the "father", he heard him say, "Some great soul, it seems, has come to the hermitage." Saying these words, the "father" looked around. But, as he did not see any one except Hriday coming, he applied his mind to the topic he had been discussing with those before him. A particular Vaishnava Sadhu had done something wrong. What was to be done about him was the discussion then going on. The "father" was much annoyed at that improper action of the Sadhu and was scolding him, saying that he would snatch away his string of beads and expel him from the community and so on. Just at that moment Sri Ramakrishna came there, saluted the "father" and sat humbly beside the persons assembled there. His face was not clearly seen by any one as the whole of his body was covered with a piece of cloth. As soon as he came and sat down, Hriday spoke to the "father" his introductory words mentioned above. At the words of Hriday the "father" suspended the talk he was engaged in, returned the salutation of the Master and Hriday and made enquiries about them.

44. Bhagavan Das's egotism of teaching people

Seeing that the "father" was counting his beads at intervals during his conversation with Hriday, the latter said, "Sir, why do you count your beads even now? You have become perfect, you have no necessity for that". We are not sure whether Hriday put that question to the "father" according to the intention of the Master or of his own accord. But it seems that he did so on his own. For, being always engaged in the Master's service and mixing with many people, high and low, in the company of the Master, Hriday had developed to a great extent presence of mind and the power of raising topics suitable to the time and circumstances. The "father" at first expressed humility at that question of Hriday and afterwards said, "Even though I personally do not require these things, they are very necessary for me in order to educate people. They will otherwise go astray by imitating me."

45. The Master in Bhavasamadhi protested against the annoyance and egotism of the "father"

Always depending entirely like a boy on the universal Mother in all respects, the Master had a reliance upon Her, so easy, natural and inward, that he felt a great pain to see or hear any person doing or intending to do anything under the impulse of egoism, let alone himself doing anything that way. Therefore, besides using the word "I" as the servant of God on rare occasions, he could never use that word in any other mood, as we do. Anyone who saw the Master even for a short time was charmed and astonished to see that trait of his, or to see his great annoyance at such apparently harmless egotistic expression used by any one else, as "I'll do such and such an action." He would be led to wonder what great offence he had committed to provoke such annoyance. Now, as soon as he came to Bhagavan Das, the Master heard him first of all say that he would snatch away the string of beads from some one and expel him from the community. Again, a little after that, he heard him say that he had not given up counting his beads and the putting on of Tilaka, so that he might teach people better. When the "father" said again and again, "I'll expel him", "I'll teach people", "I have not given up putting on Tilaka", etc., the simple-hearted Master could not suppress his annoyance as we do following the ways of

the so-called cultured people. He suddenly stood up and said to the "father", "What, you are so egotistic even now? Will you teach people? Will you expel him? will you accept or reject things? Who are you to teach people? Will you teach them if He to whom the world belongs, does not do that?" The covering of the Master's body had then fallen; the cloth he was wearing had become loose and had fallen from the loins and his face was illumined with an extraordinary divine effulgence. He was beside himself and was, it seemed, unconscious of what and to whom he was speaking. Again, hardly had he said those few words when he was motionless and speechless in Samadhi on account of the excess of spiritual emotion.

46. The "father" accepted the truth of the Master's words

Everybody had been showing respect for and devotion to the perfected "father" till then; no one till then had been bold enough to protest against his words or point out his defects. He was at first astonished to see that action of the Master. But unlike ordinary people who, under such circumstances, become angry and determine to avenge themselves, the "father" had not that feeling in his mind. The sincerity born of Tapas came to his help and made him understand the truth of the words of Sri Ramakrishna. He felt that there was no other doer in the world than God, that however much a man might think in his egotism that he was doing everything, he was actually a slave of circumstances and could do only as much as he had been given to do and understand; and that although worldly people might do whatever they liked, a devotee should not forget this truth even for a moment, lest he should go astray. Thus the powerful words of the Master opened the "father's" inward vision to a great extent, showed him his faults and made him humble and modest. Again, seeing that extraordinary manifestation of the spiritual mood in the person of Sri Ramakrishna, the "father" became convinced that he was not an ordinary person.

47. The loving conversation between the Master and Bhagavan Das. Mathur's service to the Sadhus of the hermitage

We can very easily infer that there flowed an extraordinary current of wonderful bliss, during their conversation on the divine Lord. During that talk the Master was experiencing Bhavasamadhi and enjoying unbounded bliss at short intervals; and the “father” was charmed to see that there was always manifested in the person of Sri Ramakrishna that great mood, in the study and understanding of which through the scriptures he spent so much of his time. Therefore his devotion to and reverence for Sri Ramakrishna became profound. When, afterwards, the “father” came to know that he was the Paramahamsa of Dakshineswar who, under the influence of a spiritual mood, had lost himself and occupied the seat of Sri Chaitanya at the Hari-sabha of Kalutola, there was no limit to his sorrow and repentance. He thought, “Is it this person whom I called names for nothing!” He saluted Sri Ramakrishna with humility and asked his pardon for it. Thus came to an end the play of love on the part of the Master and the “father” that day. Sri Ramakrishna came to Mathur with Hriday a little later, described to him that event from beginning to end and highly praised the exalted spiritual state of the “father”. Hearing all that, Mathur went to pay a visit to the “father” and made arrangements for the service of the images of the hermitage and a special festival for one day.

Footnote

1. The story is this: The Mother, in Her incarnation as Sati, gave up Her body in Yoga, unable to bear harsh words against Her divine consort Siva, who thereupon went on travelling with the dead body dangling from His left shoulder, forgetting everything else; Vishnu, in order to relieve Siva from this precarious condition, cut from behind Him the dead body of Sati to pieces, which fell into different places of India. These spots, thus especially sanctified by one or other piece of Her body, are known and revered as Pithasthanas.—Tr.

1. Incarnations of God very often teach people in the same way. Once upon a time the supremely glorious Jesus said to his disciples: “ To him who hath more (of faith and devotion), more shall be given and from him who hath little, that little shall be taken away.”

2. The Master expressed this last idea a little differently.

1. *Lalitavistara.*

1. Small room, made of bamboo and straw fit for one man to live in, is here called a Kupa. It looks like a plantain flower cut across in the middle and placed on the ground with its tapering part up (that is, conic in shape).

1. III. 3. 22-28.

1. III. 7. 38.

1. II. App. 26.

1. III. 7. 6.

CHAPTER IV
AS THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER—CONCLUDED

> Although unborn and changeless by nature and Lord of all beings, I am, by subjugating my Prakriti, born through Maya.
> Whenever, O descendant of Bharata, religion declines and irreligion prevails I assume a body. I am born in every age for the protection of the good, the destruction of the wicked and the establishment of religion.
>
> — Gita IV. 6-7-8

1. The Vedas call a knower of Brahman all-knowing. We dispute about it without understanding the passage

The Vedas and other Sastras say that the knowers of Brahman become all-knowing. Unlike in ordinary men, no false thought ever arises in their minds. Whenever they want to know and understand anything, it becomes immediately clear to their inward vision, in other words, they can understand the truth about it. When we heard those words, we took the position of the opponent and raised many false arguments against the scriptures without understanding the import of what they said. We said, "If that were true, why were the knowers of Brahman of the past ages of India so ignorant of the physical sciences? What knower of Brahman of India said that Hydrogen and Oxygen combined to produce water? Why did they not tell us that news from America, a continent which one required six months to reach, could be received in not more than four or five hours in this country with the help of electricity? Or, why could they not know that man can fly like birds in the air with the help of machines?"

2. The Master explained how those words were true. Press one grain of rice from the cooking-pot and you know if all are boiled soft

When we came to the Master we were told that, if we tried to understand those words of the scriptures in that way, they would give us no meaning at all. But, they would be known as true, if we should give them the meaning they were meant to express by the scriptures. The Master explained that statement with the help of one or two examples from rustic life. He said, "When rice is being boiled in a pot, if you take one grain from it and press it between your fingers, you at once know whether all the grains in it are boiled soft or not. Why? You have not surely pressed all the grains one by one. How do you then understand it? Just as this is understood, so, by examining one or two things of the world, it is understood, whether the whole universe is eternal or transitory, real or unreal. A man is born, lives for some time and then dies; a cow also does so; a tree too behaves in the same way; by examining things in this way you come to the conclusion that whatever has name and form follows this law. The earth, the sun, the moon, etc., have names and forms; they, therefore, are of the same nature. Thus, you come to know that the whole of the universe is similar. You then know the nature of all the things of the world. Is that not so? Thus, as soon as you know that the world is truly transitory and unreal, you will cease to love it; you will give it up from your mind and will be free from desires. You will have the realization of God, the cause of the universe, the very moment you dismiss it. Is he anything less than all-knowing, who realizes God this way?"

3. To know a thing together with its origin and end is to know all about it. It is the same with the world on the realization of God

When the Master spoke these words, we felt, "This is indeed true; the man who knows this, is all-knowing in a way. To see the origin of a particular thing, its middle and end is indeed what we call knowledge of that thing. So, to know or understand the universe in this way must be called knowledge of it. Again, this is equally true of the knowledge of all the particular things in the universe. Therefore, such knowledge of the universe must be regarded as that of all the things in it. So, the person who

has that knowledge may really be called all-knowing. What the scriptures have said is, therefore, quite true."

4. It is also true that a knower of Brahman has all his resolves fulfilled. Its meaning in the light of the Master's life. "I could not bring my mind to this 'cage of flesh and bone'."

We could then find a sort of meaning in the scriptural passage, "All the resolves of a knower of Brahman come true, are fulfilled." We realized as a matter of daily experience that the knowledge of a thing was acquired by an inquiry about it with our concentrated power of thinking, It was, therefore, no wonder that whenever a knower of Brahman, who had completely mastered and controlled his mind, made an inquiry with all the powers of his concentrated mind in order to know anything, he could very easily acquire the knowledge of that thing. But, there is something else to be considered on this subject: whether he who has been perfectly convinced of the transitoriness of the whole of the universe and has succeeded, through love, in having an immediate knowledge of God, the cause of the universe and the mine of all powers, will have the resolve or inclination to invent railway trains, construct destructive machines and manufactories, and so on. If those resolves can, by no means, arise in his mind, those machines and manufactories cannot surely be constructed by him. From the divine company of the Master, it became clear to us that it was actually so. It is really impossible for such inclinations to arise in such minds. When the Master was suffering from the terrible disease at Kasipur, we, Swami Vivekananda ,and others, requested him with tears in our eyes to apply the power of his mind and cure himself for our good; but he could not make such an effort or resolve. He said that on trying to do so, he could not command a sufficiently strong urge for that resolve and added, "I could by no means make the mind turn away from Existence-Knowledge-Bliss and bring it to this cage of flesh and bones. I have always looked upon the body as a trifling and contemptible object, and offered the mind for ever at the lotus feet of the Mother of the universe; can I, my children, withdraw it from Her and bring it back to the body?"

5. The description of another event in the Master's life in order to explain this subject. "The mind is in a high plane: I cannot bring it down

It will be easy for the reader to understand the subject if we mention another event here. One day the Master came to Balaram Basu's house at Baghbazar. It was about ten in the morning. It had been settled beforehand that the Master should go there that day. Some young devotees, Narendranath and others, therefore, came there to have the privilege of meeting him. They were having various talks, sometimes with the Master and sometimes among themselves. In connection with a talk on the faculty of seeing extremely small things, there arose a discussion on the microscope. Hearing that tiny things, invisible to the gross eye, could be seen through it, that a very tiny hair, seen through it, looked like a stick and that every hair on the body looked as hollow as a stem of a papaya leaf and so on, the Master expressed a boyish eagerness to see a thing or two through that instrument. The devotees, therefore, thought that they would borrow it from some one and show it to the Master that afternoon.

On inquiry it was known that Swami Premananda's brother Dr. Vipinvehari Ghosh, our esteemed friend, who had passed with honours his medical examination shortly before, got a microscope as a prize from the Medical College, Calcutta. A man was sent to him to fetch that instrument so that it might be shown to the Master. Informed of it, the Doctor came with the instrument a few hours later, at about four in the afternoon. He set it properly and asked the Master to look through it.

The Master got up, went forward, but returned without looking through the microscope. When we asked for the reason, he said, "The mind is now in such a high plane that I can by no means bring it down." We waited a long time to see if the Master's mind would come down. But on no account did it come down that day from that high spiritual plane. Therefore, he could not see through the microscope on that occasion. Having no alternative left, Vipin Babu showed those things to some of us and went away with the instrument.

6. The Master saw all persons and things in two different ways, from two different planes of consciousness: the plane of non-dual consciousness

and that of the ordinary one. The first is the plane of supersensuous vision and the second of the sensuous1. Ralph Waldo Emerson—"Consciousness ever moves along a graded plane."

The higher the plane of consciousness to which the Master's mind soared by giving up body-consciousness etc., the more extraordinary and celestial were the visions attained in those planes. And, as he was completely separated from the body when he ascended the highest plane of non-dual consciousness, his heart-beats and the functioning of the senses stopped for some time and the body lay like a corpse; all the modifications of his mind, such as thought, imagination, etc., came to a stand-still and he dwelt in absolute Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. Again, gradually coming down from the highest plane to lower and lower ones, the Master, like all other people, had in his mind once more the idea "this body is mine", and only then he saw with his eyes, heard with his ears, touched with his tactile sense, thought with his mind and so on.

7. Ordinary men see everything in the second way

An eminent philosopher[1] of the West had a little indication of the human mind ascending to, and descending from, the plane of ecstasy and expressed the opinion that the consciousness within the human body does not always remain in the same state. This view, it is superfluous to say, is reasonable and approved by the seers of ancient India. But, as the ordinary man has not ascended to that highest non-dual plane of consciousness for an infinitely long time, he has altogether forgotten it and has acquired the firm opinion that knowledge can be had only through the senses. Free from anxiety, he has, therefore, been living in the sea of the world casting his anchor there, so to say. The Adhikarika persons, the teachers of the world, known as the incarnations of God, like the Master—the Vedas and the other Sastras teach us—are born from time to time in order to destroy this delusion by behaving in their own lives in a contrary way.

8. The example of the Master's two kinds of vision

Anyway, it is now clear that in the eyes of the Master the things and persons of the world did not, as is the case with us, always seem to be those things and persons only, but that he always saw them as they looked when seen from higher and higher planes of consciousness. It was, therefore, impossible for him to have, like us, the one-sided opinion or mental attitude with respect to any object of the world. And this was why we could not understand his words and ideas though he could understand ours. We know a man, a cow and a mountain merely as such. He saw that a man, a cow and a mountain were indeed a man, a cow and a mountain; but at the same time he saw that the indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, the cause of the universe, was gleaming through them. The only difference was that its manifestation was more evident in certain things and less evident in others owing to their thinner or thicker veilings of man, cow or mountain. We, therefore, heard the Master say:

9. The Master's words on this subject and his vision—Mother peeps through different sheaths, Mother has become the prostitute, Ramani, too

"I see as if all—trees, plants, man, cow, grass, water—are sheaths of different kinds. They are like pillow-cases. Have you not seen them? Some are made of coarse cotton cloth dyed red, some of chintz and others of other kinds of cloth; some are quadrangular, others are circular. The universe is just so. Again, just as the same thing, namely, cotton, is stuffed into all these pillow-cases, so, that one indivisible Existence-Knowledge-Bliss dwells within all the sheaths—man, cow, grass, water, mountain, etc. My children, for me it is actually as if Mother has, covered Herself with wrappers of various kinds, assumed various forms and is peeping from within them all. I was in a state in which the universe seemed like that. Noticing that state of mine, people could not understand it, and came to console and soothe me. Ramlal's mother and others began to weep; when I looked at them I saw that the Mother (showing the Kali temple) it was who had come and appeared so, dressed in various forms. I saw that queer guise and rolled with laughter, saying, 'Thou hast nicely dressed up Thyself!' One day I was sitting and meditating on Mother in the Kali temple; I could by no means bring the Mother's form to my mind. What did I see then? She looked like

the prostitute, Ramani, who used to come to bathe in the river, and she peeped from near the jar of worship.[1] I saw it, laughed and said, 'Thou hast the desire, O Mother, of becoming Ramani today. That is very good. Accept the worship today in this form.' Acting thus, She made it clear that a prostitute also is She, there is nothing else except Her. On another occasion I was driving along Mechhobazar road, when I saw that She, dressed beautifully and with ornaments, braided hair and a small round mark in the middle of Her forehead, stood on the verandah—smoking tobacco from a hookah set in a socket and was enticing people in the form of a prostitute. In astonishment, I said, 'Art Thou here, O Mother,, in this form?' Saying so, I saluted Her." We have completely forgotten to see things and persons thus from higher planes of consciousness. How can we, therefore, understand those experiences of the Master?

10. The Master's senses, mind and intellect were keener than those of ordinary persons. Non-attachment to enjoyment and pleasure was the cause of it. A contrast between the actions of minds attached and unattached

Again, when the Master remained in the normal plane of body-consciousness like ourselves, his intellect and power of observation could detect many things and dive deeper than ours, inasmuch as even then he had not an iota of the desire for enjoyment and pleasure. The objects which satisfy the particular strong desire of each of us for attaining pleasure and enjoyment appear in bright colours before our eyes at all times and in every action of ours, eating, drinking, sitting, etc. Our minds, therefore, neglect the things and persons unfavourable to that desire and get attracted to a great extent towards the things mentioned above. We have, therefore, no opportunity of knowing the nature of the things and persons so neglected. We thus spend the whole of our lives in making or attempting to make certain things and persons our own. This is why people in general are seen to differ so greatly among themselves in the power of acquiring knowledge. Though all of us have the same senses, can we equally apply them to all objects and acquire equal knowledge? Therefore, those of us who have less selfishness and less desire for enjoyment than others can more easily acquire the knowledge of everything.

11. Examples of the keenness of the Master's mind

It will not be out of place to give here one or two examples to show how strong the power of observation in the Master was, even when he was dwelling in the normal plane of consciousness. It is impossible to exaggerate how great an indication of his keen power of observation was noticed in the illustrations, metaphors, etc., generally used by him in explaining intricate spiritual truths. The Master used to reveal a glowing picture with the help of each of these and the hearer would understand that the solution of that intricate problem was possible.

(a) His easy explanation of the Sankhya philosophy,— "the master and mistress of a house, where a marriage is being celebrated"

Take for example the discussion on the intricate Sankhya philosophy that was going on. Speaking to us of the origination of the universe from Purusha and Prakriti, the Master said, "Purusha, it (Sankhya) says, is a non-doer, he does nothing; it is Prakriti that does everything; Purusha looks on all the doings of Prakriti as a witness; Prakriti also cannot do anything independently." The audience were indeed sapient scholars—clerks, or accountants in offices, or, at most, doctors, pleaders, deputy magistrates, and boys of schools and colleges! Therefore, when they heard the Master say those words, they stared at one another's face. Observing them, the Master continued, "Do you not remember a marriage house? Sitting and smoking tobacco from a hookah, the master has given orders and the mistress, obedient to them, is running hither and thither with patches of turmeric colour in her Sari, supervising everything to see whether this has been finished, whether that has been started and so on, welcoming all the lady guests, children and others and coming up to her husband from time to time to say to him with the movement of her head and hands, 'This has been done this way, that, that way, this will have to be done, that will not be done.' The master smokes and listens and gives his assent to everything, saying 'yes, yes' to whatever she says. It is just like that." All laughed to hear the Master's words and could also understand the exposition of the Sankhya philosophy.

(b) Brahman and Maya are one; the same snake, motionless and in motion.

Afterwards, perhaps, came up the topic of the Vedanta, “Brahman and Its Power, Purusha and Prakriti, are identical, that is, they are not two separate entities but one and the same thing appearing now as Purusha, now as Prakriti.” Seeing that we could not understand it, the Master said, “Do you know how this is? Take for example a snake, now in motion, now at rest. When it is lying motionless, it is compared to Purusha. Prakriti is then united with Purusha and has become one with It. And when the snake is in motion, Prakriti is, as it were, separated from Purusha and is working.” All understood from that picture what was meant, and thought, “Ah! Why could we not understand this simple thing?”

(c) Isvara is not bound by Maya; a snake has poison in its mouth but it does not die

On still another occasion, perhaps, there was raised the question, “Is Isvara bound by Maya like ourselves, inasmuch as Maya is His Power and exists in Him?” The Master heard it and said, “No, my children, though Maya belongs to Isvara and always exists in Him, He is never bound by it. Consider, whoever is bitten by a snake dies; poison is always there in the mouth of the snake; the snake always takes its food, gulps in saliva with that food but does not itself die. It is just like that.” All thought it was possible indeed.

When the Master dwelt in the normal state of consciousness, the nature of anything, these examples show, could not escape his keen observation. Even external nature could not keep concealed from his eyes the essential qualities of its changes, let alone human nature. We are, of course, not speaking of those changes of external nature, which can be detected and understood only with the help of instruments.

12. The Master saw exceptional changes in nature and was convinced that God changed His law

Another point to be noted in this connection is that those exceptional changes or manifestations of the external nature that do not generally attract the notice of people were first, as it were, to be the objects of the Master's observation, when he remained in the normal plane of consciousness. The divine Mother placed at all times before the Master the uncommon manifestations of nature, the exceptions to the general law, as if to impress upon his mind the idea that all kinds of manifestations in the world owed their origin to the will of God; in other words, He was the direct controller of the wheels of the destinies of all things and persons in the world. From such events as the Master came across from his childhood, we get the clear meaning of his words, "The lord of laws can at will alter them and make new ones instead." It will not be out of place here to mention a few such events.

13. Told of the lightning-conductor the Master related his experience: "Iightning struck a hut beside a three-storeyed house"

We were charmed to read in our college days a little of the discoveries of modern physics regarding the power of electricity. In our boyish liveliness, one day we raised that topic in the presence of the Master and were speaking various things to one another. Observing the repeated utterance of the word electricity, the Master expressed curiosity like a boy and asked, "Well, what are you talking about? What is the meaning of 'electictic'?" We laughed to hear the Master's pronunciation of that English word, like that of a boy. Afterwards we told him the general laws of electricity. We also told him of the utility of the lightning-conductor, that its height should be a little greater than that of the house, inasmuch as the highest point is struck by lightning, and so on. The Master listened attentively to all our words and said, "But, I saw a small shed beside a three-storeyed house, and the wretched power of the lightning, instead of striking the latter, struck the former. What have you got to say to this? Can all these things be conformably explained, my children? The law exists by the will of the universal Mother and gets reversed again by Her will." We tried to explain to the Master the natural laws but, like Mathur Babu, could not find a suitable reply on that occasion. We told the Master that the lightning was

attracted towards the three-storeyed house but it struck the shed because its course was suddenly deflected by an unknown cause. We continued to say that, although one or two exceptions were seen, lightning struck the highest points in thousands of other places, and so on. But the Master never accepted the statement that the events of nature took place according to inviolable laws. He said, “Let us take for granted that lightning behaves in thousands of places in the way you say, but, as there are a few exceptions, the law, it is clear, loses its uniformity.”

14. He saw a white china-rose flower on a red china-rose plant

There were, the botanists have recorded, exceptions to the production of white or red flowers in the case of plants that generally produce either of them only. But they are so uncommon that it is no exaggeration to say that an ordinary man has never seen them. Look at an event of the Master’s life. At the very time of the controversy between the Master and Mathur Babu on the proposition that laws of nature are not invariable but are changed by the will of God, an exception came to the notice of the Master and was shown to Mathur Babu.

15. From uncommon events in nature arose the conviction of the Master that the whole universe was the playground of the Mother of the universe

Thus the Master saw a living stone[1]; he saw the coccyx of the human body elongate itself a little and shrink to its natural length afterwards; and he met with gods and ghosts. We heard of all these and of many more events of the Master’s life. In imitation of the West we have come to the conclusion that Nature, the creatrix of the world, is insentient and absolutely destitute of the power of intelligence. We, therefore, remain satisfied with calling those exceptional events natural aberrations and think that we have understood all the laws by which nature is regulated. The Master’s conviction was of a different nature. He was conscious that the whole of external and internal nature was nothing but the sport of the living universal Mother immediately known. He, therefore, looked upon these exceptional events as the productions of Her particular desires. It does not

need to be stated that, on account of this conviction, the Master's mind had much more peace and bliss than ours, if not anything else. We have mentioned a few such instances of the Master's life before, and will do so later on.

16. The Master knew from a higher plane of consciousness the amount of the power manifested and solidified, as it were, in any particular place

The Master saw all things and persons from the two standpoints mentioned before and then came to a certain conclusion about them. He did not form any opinion like us, who make observations from the ordinary plane of consciousness only. Therefore, when he undertook travels to holy places and paid visits to holy men, he estimated their spiritual values in both these ways. It was by an observation from higher planes of consciousness that the Master knew how much of high spiritual power was concentrated in any particular place of pilgrimage, in other words, how much power a particular holy place had of helping man to ascend to those planes. The Master's mind, destitute of the attachment to sights, tastes, and other objects, and always pure like those of the gods, was a wonderful detector and indicator of that subtle fact. As soon as the Master went to a place of pilgrimage or a temple, his mind ascended to a higher plane of consciousness and revealed to him the divine manifestation of that place or temple. It was from that high plane of consciousness that the Master saw Kasi golden, and could understand how a Jiva became freed from all bondage at death in Kasi. It was from the same high plane again, that he experienced a special manifestation of divine presence at Vrindavan and had the immediate knowledge of the existence of the subtle presence of Sri Gauranga at Navadwip down till today.

17. It is well known that Sri Chaitanya discovered the places of the sport of Sri Krishna at Vrindavan

Sri Chaitanya was the first, it is said, to experience the manifestation of divine presence at Vrindavan. Before his advent, the holy places of pilgrimage at Vraja were almost forgotten. When he travelled in those

places, his mind ascended to higher planes of consciousness and he experienced the particular divine manifestation of Sri Krishna in particular places, where, long ago, Bhagavan Sri Krishna had actually sported. His disciples, Rupa, Sanatana and others, at first, put their faith in those facts, which was successively handed down by them and their disciples to all the inhabitants of India. It is in this way that they have come to believe in those facts. We could not have at all understood the aforesaid manner of Sri Chaitanya's discovery of Vrindavan and would not have at all entertained the idea of its possibility, had we not seen the power of the Master's mind, of rightly detecting and understanding things and persons from higher planes of consciousness. And in spite of that, how little have we believed in those facts? Here are, however, a few examples of this.

18. Such events in the Master's life in Bhavasamadhi. He had the vision of the former image of Mrinmayi at VanaVishnupur

Hriday, the Master's nephew, belonged to the village of Sihar, not far from Kamarpukur. The Master, we have told the reader before, went there occasionally and spent some time before he returned to Dakshineswar. The Master was there on one occasion when there arose an altercation over some secular affairs between Hriday's younger brother Rajaram and another person of the village. From words they gradually came to blows and Rajaram, happening to find a hookah near at hand, struck him on the head with it. The injured man sued Rajaram for assault. As the event happened in the presence of the Master and as the man knew him from before as honest and truthful, he cited him as a witness. The Master, therefore, had to come to Vana-Vishnupur to appear as a witness. Before he came there he scolded Rajaram very much for being thus blinded by anger and, when there, he said to him again, "Compound the case anyhow by giving him (the complainant) money; the case will otherwise go against you. I can by no means tell a lie. As soon as I am asked, I shall plainly say what I have seen and known." Rajaram got frightened and set about compounding the case. The Master took that opportunity to go out and see the town of Vana-Vishnupur.

19. The condition of the town of Vana-Vishnupur

At one time that town was very prosperous. This becomes clear from the existence there of big ponds like Lalbandh, Krishnabandh, etc., of a great many temples, of the clean broad roads for the convenience of pedestrians, of the bazars full of shops, and of the ruins of numberless temples and residences of many people, and from the flowing in and out of many people for trade and business purposes. The princes of Vishnupur were once very religious and powerful and great patrons of learning. The town was formerly famous for the cultivation of music. The princely family became the followers of the Vaishnava cult, shortly after the passing away of Rupa, Sanatana and the other companions of Sri Chaitanya. The image of Sri Madanamohan, installed at Baghbazar, Calcutta, belonged formerly to the princes of this place. Once upon a time, Gokul Chandra Mitra, it is said, lent a large sum of money to the prince of that place. He became charmed on seeing that image. When the time for the repayment of the debt came, he, instead of receiving the money back, asked the prince the image and got it.

20. Sri Madanamohan and Mrinmayi

Besides Sri Madanamohan, there was a very ancient image named Mrinmayi installed by the princess. The goddess Mrinmayi, it was said, was a living presence, was very much “awakened”,[1] as they called her. Once, when the house of the prince fell on evil times, that image was broken by a mad woman. The family, therefore, installed a new image in its stead.

After visiting all other temples, the Master was going to pay his obeisance to Mrinmayi. At one place on his way, he was in ecstasy and saw Mrinmayi’s face only. When he went to the temple and saw the newly installed image, he found that it was not similar to the image seen in his ecstasy. He could not at all understand the reason for the disparity. On inquiry, it was afterwards known that the new image was really dissimilar to the old one. While making the new image, the potter had actually formed the face in a different fashion in order to display his skill. The broken head of the old image was carefully kept by a Brahmin in his own house. Shortly after, that devout Brahmin had another image made to bear that head, and

installed it in a beautiful spot near the pond, Lalbandh, and began to perform its daily worship and other services.

21. The Master's power of detecting the mental attitudes and aims of people: The first example

It is good to mention here a few examples of the Master's power of detecting the aims and attitudes of people approaching him. We have already mentioned that the Master loved the revered Swami Brahmananda as if he were his own son. One day the Swami was standing on the northern side of the long verandah to the east of the Master's room and talking with him on various subjects. He saw a coach drawn by a pair of horses coming towards them from the direction of the gate of the garden. It was a phaeton and a few gentlemen were sitting in it. No sooner had he seen it, than he could know that it belonged to a well-known rich man of Calcutta. Many people from Calcutta then used to come to see the Master. He was, therefore, not astonished that they had also come for that purpose.

But as soon as the Master's eyes fell on the phaeton, he shrank with fear, went in extreme hurry out of their sight into his own room, and sat down there. Surprised to see that attitude of the Master, Swami Brahmananda too followed him into the room. Scarcely had the Master seen him when he said, "Go, go. If they want to come here tell them I cannot see them now." So charged by the Master, he came out again. In the meantime the new-comers approached him and asked, "Does not a Sadhu live here?" Swami Brahmananda mentioned the name of the Master and said "Yes, he lives here; why do you want to see him?" One of them said, "One of our relatives is seriously ill; he can by no means be brought round; the Sadhu might kindly give some medicine; that is why we have come." Swami Brahmananda said, "You have been misinformed; he never gives any medicine to anyone; you may have heard of Brahmachari Durgananda; he indeed is there in the hut at the Panchavati. You will meet him there."

When the new-comers had gone away, the Master said to Swami Brahmananda, "I saw such a great power of Tamas in them that I could not look at them, let alone talk to them. I fled out of fear." We found the Master thus daily understanding from a higher plane of consciousness the high or

low manifestation of power in every place, thing and person. We came to believe in his words finding on repeated inquiry that such qualities, good or bad, as the Master mentioned, really existed in them. We propose to mention here a few more such examples and then tell the reader what he experienced from the normal plane of consciousness in those places of pilgrimage.

22. The second example of this. Swami Vivekananda and his fellow pupils who came to Dakshineswar

The liberal-minded Swami Vivekananda used to feel pain from his childhood at others' misery. He, therefore, always encouraged all his friends and relatives to do what-ever he had had done and benefited from. Or, he would ask his benefactors to be similarly benevolent to his friends. This was the Swami's habit with regard to education, religion and all other matters. We get an indication of the above-mentioned fact from his actions. When he reached his youth, he organized meetings and associations in various places for prayer, meditation, etc., with his fellow pupils on fixed days. During his college life, no sooner had he become acquainted with Maharshi Devendranath and the devout Kesav, the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj, than he took many of his friends to those personages.

Since the Swami had the sacred privilege of meeting the Master, and became acquainted with his extraordinary detachment, renunciation and love of God, it became, as it were, a religious vow in his life to take his friends and fellow pupils and introduce them to him. Because we say this, let no one think that the intelligent Swami brought to the Master anyone and everyone, to whom he was attracted during a short acquaintance only. He used to take to Dakshineswar only those whom, as the result of a long acquaintance, he knew to be possessed of good character and devoted to religion.

23. "One cannot become what one wishes to, even by making efforts"

The Swami thus took many of his friends to the Master then. But we were told, from time to time, by both the Master and the Swami, that the

divine insight of the Master penetrated to their inner nature and arrived at different conclusions. The Swami said, “When I found that the Master did not bestow that kind of grace on them which he had done on me by accepting me and instructing me in spiritual matters, I used to ask him importunately to bestow it also on them. On account of boyish flippancy I was ready on many occasions to argue with him. I said, ‘Why, sir? God is indeed never so partial as to bestow His grace on some and not on others. Why should you then not accept them as you have done me? Is it not certain that one can attain spirituality and realize God if one wills and makes efforts, just as one can become a learned scholar if one puts forth an effort?’ The Master replied, ‘What can I do, my child? Mother shows me that there is the beastly mental attitude of a bull in them; they cannot realize spirituality in this life; what can I do? And what is it you say? Can anyone become in this life, what he wishes to, by merewill and effort?’ But, who lent an ear to the Master’s words then? I said, ‘What do you say, sir? Can’t one become what one wishes to, if one wills and makes efforts? Surely one can. I cannot believe what you say about it.’ At that also the Master said the same thing, ‘Whether you believe it or not, Mother shows me that.’ I never accepted then what he said. But, as time passed on, more and more did I understand from experience that what the Master said was right and what I had thought was wrong.”

24. The third example: in connection with the Master’s drinking water during his visit to Pandit Sasadhar

The Swami said that it was by testing and appraising him thus that he could gradually believe in all the words of the Master. It will not be out of place to narrate here another event as told by the Swami to show that he tested every action and behaviour of the Master. Having heard from the Swami about Pandit Sasadhar Tarkachudamani, the Master went to see him on the day of the Car festival of 1885. He gave the Pandit various instructions such as, “Those persons only who have got power direct from the Mother of the universe can truly become preachers of religion, the grandiloquence of other so-called preachers is in vain”, and so on and then asked for a glass of water to drink. We do not know whether the Master was

thirsty and wanted water or had some other purpose. For, he told us on another occasion that harm came on a householder, if a Sadhu or a Sannyasin, a guest or a Fakir went to his house but returned without taking anything; when, therefore, he went to any house, he asked for something and ate it before he returned, even if the householder did not of his own accord offer anything or forgot to do so. Anyway, as soon as the Master asked for water, a person, with Tilaka, strings of beads and other emblems of religion on his body, respectfully brought a glass of water and gave it to the Master. But when the Master was about to drink it, he could not do so. Another man, who was beside him, saw it and threw away the water in the glass. Filling it then with water again, he brought the glass to the Master. The Master drank a little of it and bade good-bye to the Pandit for that day. Everyone thought that something had fallen into the water brought at first and that was why the Master had not drunk it.

The Swami said that he was sitting very near the Master then. He, therefore, saw clearly that there was neither a mote nor a bit of straw or any dirt in the water, yet the Master had refused to drink it. On pondering over the cause of it, the Swami thought the glass of water was perhaps polluted by "contactual impurity". For, he had heard the Master say that his hand did not proceed but contracted after going a little forward to take any kind of food or drink brought by those in whom worldly-mindedness was viciously prevalent, who dishonestly earned money by cheating, robbery or doing harm to others in any other way, and who externally assumed the guise of religion, so that it might be of help to them in satisfying their lust and greed. He was also heard to say that he could know those things immediately.

The Swami said that as soon as that thought arose in his mind, he made a firm resolve to ascertain the truth of that matter and though requested by the Master himself to come with him on that occasion, the Swami helped him to the carriage, expressed his inability to come with him, and said that an urgent piece of business detained him there. As the Swami was already acquainted with the younger brother of the man with the emblems of religion on his person, he called him to a secluded place when the Master had left and began to put questions to him about the character of his elder brother. Questioned thus, he hesitated at first, but afterwards said, "How can I speak of the bad character of my elder brother?" and so on. The Swami

said, “I could understand the truth from that. Later on I questioned another person of that household who was acquainted with me, and came to know everything. Freed from doubt then, I wondered how the Master could know people’s minds.”

25. The nature of the Master’s mental constitution. The standard by which he judged all things and persons and ascertained their worth

If we want to know how, when dwelling in the normal plane of consciousness, the Master detected and understood the internal good and bad qualities of all things, we must first of all understand his mental constitution and then know the constant standard by which he judged all things and arrived at certain conclusions about them. We have given the reader an indication of it in many places of this book. It will, therefore, suffice to make here only a brief mention of it. As the Master’s mind was not attached to any worldly thing, it became, we have seen, immediately united with, or separated from, anything he wanted to accept or reject. When separated from anything it never again cast a look behind even once during his life. Again, the Master’s extraordinary steadfastness, wonderful power of discrimination and perfect attention, gave him full control over his mind and kept it steady for any length of time on any object. They did not allow it for a moment to think of or imagine anything else. As soon as one part of it was ready to accept or reject anything, another part of it asked instantly, “Why are you going to do so?” If it got a reasonable answer to this question, it said, “It is very good. Do it by all means.” And the moment that conclusion was reached, the other part of the mind said at once, “Then stick to it firmly; you must never act contrary to it, whether you are eating or relaxing, whether it be your waking state or the dreaming one.” All parts of his mind then accepted that thing unanimously and acted accordingly. Steadfastness stood guard over and carefully scrutinized his mind’s behaviour regarding it. So, even if by mistake he ever proceeded to act against the decision, the Master clearly felt as if some one from within had tied down his sense and did not allow him to act that way. We all understand the above-mentioned words when we study the Master’s lifelong behaviour towards all things and persons.

26. An example of it— “I don’t want a learning that results in ‘the bundling of rice and plantain’ ”

Observe how the boy Gadadhar had gone to school for barely a few days when he said at once, “I don’t want that ‘art which teaches one ‘to bundle rice and plantain’. I won’t learn it.” Thinking his younger brother was going astray, the Master’s elder brother Ramkumar made an attempt to persuade him to acquire learning under his direct supervision in his own Chatushpathi in Calcutta. But he could not change the Master’s opinion, formed during his childhood, regarding a bread-winning education. The Master was not unaware that even by opening a Chatushpathi and teaching pupils according to his capacity, he could not maintain his family. The Master thought it was far better for his elder brother, though a Pandit of virtuous conduct, to be appointed priest in Rani Rasmani’s temple, than earn money by flattering the rich, and this led to his approval of his brother’s action.

27. Second example—his feeling as if some one tightened up all the joints of his body as soon as he sat for meditation and his vision of a person with a trident in hand

As soon as he sat for meditation during his Sadhana, he felt all the joints of his body becoming locked up with rapping sounds, as if some one from within tightened them up in order to keep him sitting for a long time in the same cross-legged posture in which he had sat down. And until he unlocked them, the Master could not, even if he tried to, turn, move or otherwise use the joints of the hands, legs, neck, waist and other parts of his body at will. Or, he saw a person with a trident in hand, sitting beside him and saying, “If you think on anything except God, I’ll pierce your chest with this trident.” Asked during the time of worship to look upon himself as identified with the Mother of the universe, his mind began to do so; although he was going to offer china-roses and Vilva leaves at Her lotus feet, some one, as it were, caused his hands to turn and pulled them towards his own head.

28. Third example: going to offer flowers at the lotus feet of the universal Mother, he placed them on his own head; and going to offer oblations of water to the forefathers, he was unable to do so

Again, as soon as he was initiated in Sannyasa, his mind continued to see the one non-dual Brahman in all beings. Although he went to offer oblations of water to his forefathers (Tarpana), as he was wont to do, his hands became stiff; he could not take the water to be offered in the hollow of his joined palms. He was thus perforce reminded that Vedic actions had been renounced by him, as he had taken Sannyasa.

29. The spiritual experiences of the unlettered Master demonstrated the truths contained in the Vedas and other Sastras

Many such examples can be given to prove how easy and natural the detachment, discrimination, concentration and steadfastness of his mind were. As these experiences of the Master were exactly what were recorded in the scriptures, it was proved that what was written in the scriptures was true. The revered Swami Vivekananda said, “That is the reason why the Master came this time to play the part of an unlettered person. He remained illiterate, because he wanted to demonstrate that the spiritual states, recorded in the Vedas and the Vedantas of the Hindus and in the religious books of other people, were all true and that man can actually realize those states by travelling along the paths indicated therein”.

30. The goal of human life is the attainment of the non-dual knowledge. In that state, “All jackals howl in the same way.” With Sri Chaitanya devotion was like the tusks of an elephant which are seen, and the non-dual knowledge, like the inner teeth, which are not seen. Approach to non-dual knowlledge was the standard by which the Master judged the high or low state of a man or a society

While one studies the natural bent of the Master’s mind, it becomes clear to one that to attain the Nirvikalpa plane of consciousness and realize the non-dual Being is the ultimate experience in human life. Again, the Master said about the spiritual experience on that plane, “All jackals howl in the

same way there." He meant to say that just as all jackals howl in the same way, so, each of those who attained the Nirvikalpa plane, has said the same thing about God, the cause of the universe, as viewed from that plane. About Sri Chaitanya, the incarnation of Love, the Master said, "Just as the tusks of an elephant seen from outside are for killing his enemies and the inner ones not so seen are for the purpose of chewing his food, so, in the case of the great lord, dualism was an outward attitude, and non-dualism an inward one." It is therefore superfluous to say that non-dual knowledge, which is always of a uniform nature, was the standard by which the Master judged everything. To the degree that any ideas, actions or ceremonies helped forward individuals (or societies, which are aggregates of individuals) towards that plane, to that degree did the Master regard those ideas etc., as higher than others.

31. Visions knowable to oneself and those knowable to others also

Again, when we study the Master's visions born of his spiritual moods, we find a distinction, namely, some are knowable to himself alone and some to others also. Some of those visions of the Master were thoughts of the Master's mind confined within his own body, solidified and embodied, so to speak, by steadfast and constant practice and manifested to him in those forms and it was he only who could see them. Some others were seen by him as he passed through higher and higher planes and was on the verge of the Nirvikalpa plane or when he was abiding in Bhavamukha. The contents of the visions of the latter kind, although unknown to others at that time, were for him quite objectively existent and he would predict their coming true in course of time and all actually saw them later as facts and events. In order to realize that the former class of visions were true, one had to be endowed like him with faith, reverence, steadfastness, etc.; or, one had to ascend to that plane in which the Master had those visions. But in order to realize the latter class as true one required no faith, no Sadhana—one had to believe them as the results compelled one to do so.

32. The Master's mind could not rest till it arrived at reliable conclusions about the states of things and persons

From what we have said before about the nature of the Master's mind, and what we have said just now about it, we can understand that such a mind could not remain idle even in the normal state of consciousness. For, it could not feel satisfied till it had studied the nature and behaviour of those things and persons it came in contact with even for a moment and arrived at reliable conclusions about them. In his childhood it discerned that scholars studied the scriptures for the purpose of earning money, which led him to refrain from learning the art that taught him "the bundling of rice and plantain", as he derisively called it. As he advanced in age his mind came in contact with various people in various places, and arrived at various conclusions about them. Those conclusions will be the subject of our discussion now.

33. What the Master saw in the normal plane of consciousness—the ill-will between the Saktas and the Vaishnavas

It is superfluous to say that the ill-will between the Saktas and the Vaishnavas of Bengal, which came into existence at the time of the passing away of Sri Chaitanya, continued unbroken. Although a few rare Sadhakas like Ramprasad and others realized with the help of their Sadhana, the oneness of Kali and Krishna and preached that the ill-will was wrong and uncalled-for, it is clear from the censorious gloating which accompanied the mutual condemnation of the deities of both sides, that the generality of the people instead of paying heed to their words have allowed themselves to be carried away by hatred. It is needless to say that the Master was acquainted with that fact from his childhood. Again, applying himself to the disciplines prescribed in the scriptures of both the communities and attaining perfection in both, he realized both the paths to be equally true. He then clearly understood that the cause of the mutual hatred between the Saktas and the Vaishnavas was the vanity and egotism born of lack of spirituality.

34. To remove that hatred from his own household he got them all intiated in the Mantra of Sakti

The Master's father, a worshipper of Sri Ramachandra, providentially got the stone emblem called Raghuvir and installed it in his house. Although the Master was thus born in a Vaishnava family, it was evident that from childhood he had equal love towards both Siva and Vishnu. His neighbours say even now that he dressed himself as Siva at one time during his childhood, and remained in ecstasy for a few hours in that mood, and they show the particular spot where that event took place as proof of this fact. Another event may be mentioned here. At one time the Master had every one of his household initiated in the Mantras of both Vishnu and Sakti. The Master, we infer, acted in this manner only to remove that hatred from their minds.

35. The origin of the custom of Sadhus prescribing and administering medicine, which led gradually to their spiritual degradation

It is now well known that Asoka the Great, the "man of Dharma", made up his mind to spread religion and learning for the good of humanity. He established hospitals for man and beast in various places of India for the treatment of their physical ailments and made medicinal plants, creepers, etc., easily available to the public, by having them cultivated and collected. Moreover he sent, through Buddhist monks, to foreign countries medicines and medicinal herbs and made them available there. It is perhaps from that time that Sadhus began to collect and preserve medicines. Again, that custom became more prevalent during the Tantric age. Seeing the spiritual degradation of Sadhus on account of that custom, the authors of the Samhitas in the following age raised a great objection against it. But that custom has not died even now in the conservative India. During his stay at Dakshineswar and travels to holy places, the Master saw many monks falling a prey to worldly enjoyments for ever. Thus the Master was convinced of the lack of spirituality amongst the monks too. For, he said to us time and again, "Never believe Sadhus who prescribe and administer medicine, who practise exorcism, who receive money, and who adorn their bodies with the outward marks of religion (such as Tilaka, wearing wooden sandals, etc.,) rather excessively and pose themselves as big Sadhus, the marks serving as their signboard."[1]

36. The Master's opinion on Sadhus who merely put on the religious garb

Let no one think from what has been said that, seeing the hypocritical and fallen monks, the Master, like the people of the West, was of opinion that all the monastic communities should be abolished. For, we heard the Master say on this subject from time to time, "An ordinary Vairagi in religious garb living on alms, compared with a householder of good character, must be regarded as higher than the other, for though he does not practise Yoga or other religious exercises, if he possesses a good character and lives his whole life on Bhiksha, he has in this life gone much farther ahead on the path of renunciation than an ordinary householder." The aforesaid words of the Master are amongst the many instances illustrating the fact that to him renunciation of everything for the sake of God was the measure of a man's conduct and character.

37. The lives of true Sadhus breathe life into the Sastras

We have already given many examples of the fact that steadfast Sadhus belonging to any community whatever, following either the path of devotion or of knowledge, were much honoured by the Master. The lamp of the Sanatana Dharma, the eternal religion of India, has been kept burning by the realizations of these great souls. The authority of the Vedas and other scriptures as repositories of spiritual truths is demonstrated by those among them who have reached the acme of their lives by the realisation of God and are freed from all bondages of Maya. For, the Vaiseshikas and all other philosophers of this country have unanimously said that the Vedas are revealed to the Aptas (those who have attained the truth) only. It was, therefore, no wonder that the Master, possessed of a profound inner vision, could know that fact and honoured them accordingly.

38. The Master noticed narrowness even in true Sadhus

Although the Master viewed with an exceedingly loving eye the Sadhus going forward along their own paths with steadfast devotion and enjoyed their company greatly, he invariably found in them lack of one thing, which

pained him much on several occasions. He saw that they could not mix uniformly with all communities with equal love, though it was so easy for him. He noticed this narrowness even amongst the advanced aspirants, the Sannyasins treading the path of non-duality, not to speak of those travelling on the path of devotion. Long before they attained the liberal sameness of the non-dual plane they learnt uniformly to hate the people going on all other paths, as inferior in spiritual fitness, or, at best, to view them with condescension. The liberal-minded Master, it is needless to say, was much grieved to see that kind of mutual hatred among people going forward to the same goal and he clearly saw that the said illiberality or exclusiveness was produced by the lack of true spirituality.

39. The Master had an experience of this lack of spirituality in places of pilgrimage. What a great difference between our experience and that of the Master!

When he was staying at the Kali temple at Dakshineswar, the Master got daily proof of exclusiveness and lack of spirituality among both classes of men, householders and monks. When he travelled to holy places and temples, he found that these evils were not less, but in fact more virulent there. The quarrel amongst the Brahmins when they received gifts from Mathur; the Tantric Sadhakas' improper conduct at Kasi due to excessive drinking after performing the divine Mother's nominal worship, to witness which they had invited the Master; the strenuous exertion for name and fame of the Dandies (the Swamis carrying staves as their insignia) and at Vrindavan the Vaishnava fathers' lives, spent in the company of women under the pretext of practising Sadhana,—all these and many more were the facts that revealed themselves in their true colours to the keen insight of the Master and helped him in understanding the actual state of society and the country. A mere observation of these events could not, of course, have helped him very much in this respect, had he not in himself had the realization of the very profound non-dual truth. As he had already realized that truth, the idea of the Ultimate aim of individual and social life was firmly fixed in the Master's mind. It was, therefore, easy for him to sound and understand all things by testing them by that truth. And this study and

experience, during his stay in the normal plane of consciousness, of the daily events of individual and social life, helped him in ascertaining the value of all things, inasmuch as he knew without doubt the goal to which true progress, civilization, morality, education, love of God, steadfast adherence to customs, Yoga, Karma and other impelling forces were taking man or would lead him, when they reached their fully developed state. Consider, how could he understand how far a particular Sadhu had advanced if he had not the knowledge of true holiness? How could the very truthful Master encourage people so firmly to go on pilgrimage and worship God with forms, if he had not known without doubt that spirituality had been consolidated, so to speak, and deposited in holy places and in images of deities? Or, how could he understand that exclusiveness in all the various religions was wrong, if he had not known the direction they were taking and the goal they would ultimately lead to? We also daily see Sadhus, holy places, images of deities, hear the endless tumult produced by the discussion of various religious and scriptural doctrines, sometimes think one doctrine to be right and sometimes another, tempted by our delight in wrangles and intellectual gymnastics. Again, trying to ascertain the goal of humanity by the study and observance of the daily events of the work-a-day world, we sometimes take one thing to be the goal, sometimes another, and failing to arrive at any definite conclusion, go on oscillating and vacillating and, as it happens not unoften, turn atheists ultimately and regard worldly enjoyments as the real goal of life. What important help do we derive from this kind of experience of ours, from such ever-changing and never-abiding conclusions of ours? We are not confident that our crude minds can understand even in a hundred lives, without the help of great souls, the teachers of the world, what the Master could, by virtue of the aforesaid wonderful constitution and nature of his mind, detect and understand at the very first sight. We infer from every action and behaviour of the Master what a gulf of difference there is between his mind and ours, though as minds they appear to be similar. Devotional scriptures, therefore, have pointed out that the mind of an incarnation of God is made of an altogether different material—of pure Sattva-guna (that illumines and gives knowledge) untouched by Rajas and Tamas.

40. The Master came to know of his own liberal doctrine

Observing thus from both the divine and the ordinary planes of consciousness, the Master came to know in an especial way, from his contact with people at Dakshineswar and during his visits to holy places, the present lack of spirituality in the country and the prevailing exclusiveness in religious faiths and denominations. He dived deeper and found out that although all religious doctrines were equally true and although they make men of various natures reach ultimately the same goal through various paths, the previous teachers were either ignorant of this truth or intentionally refrained from preaching it, considering the places, times and persons to be unsuitable. Moreover, it dawned on him that this attitude of his, which was free from the slightest touch of exclusiveness or hatred, was an entirely novel thing in the world. It originated with him and he was to give it to the world.

41. The Master understood that he was the first in the world to realize the truth: “all faiths are true—as many faiths, so many paths”

Many of us have now come to understand that the highest liberal doctrine, namely, “all faiths are true; as many faiths, so many paths”, which has charmed the world, first emanated from the Master’s mouth. Some may raise an objection and say that at least a partial manifestation of that liberal principle was seen in some of the Rishis and religious teachers of the past. But when one looks a little below the surface, it becomes clear to one that those teachers culled certain portions of each of those faiths with the help of their intelligence and then dished up a sort of harmony among what they regarded essential in them. Unlike other teachers of the past, the Master excluded nothing from any faith. He practised with equal enthusiasm all of them in his own life, reached the goal as indicated by those faiths and realized that profound truth. It is however not our intention here to discuss this subject in detail. The only thing that we want to tell the reader here is that we get the proof of the existence in the Master’s life of this liberal principle from his childhood. But, until he returned from his visits to holy places, the Master was not able to understand with certainty that it was he alone who had experienced that liberalism in the spiritual world and that,

although the past seers, teachers and incarnations of God preached in society how to reach the goal through particular paths, none of them, uptill then, had preached that the same goal could be reached through all the different paths. Although, at the time of his Sadhana, he offered with all his heart all his desires at the lotus feet of the divine Mother, and resolved never to return to the realm of Maya, and dwelt incessantly in the plane of the non-dual consciousness, She did not allow him to do so, but retained his body even after this, through various inconceivable means. All that, the Master knew, was for this one purpose—the purpose of removing illiberalism and exclusiveness from the world as far as possible. He knew, moreover, that the world too was thirsting for this extremely beneficial truth. We shall make here an attempt to tell the reader how we arrived at the aforesaid conclusion.

42. The Master realized that the divine Mother had endowed him with extraordinary power in order that religion might be imparted to the world

That the realization of religion was dependent on practice, not on words, was the belief of the Master from his childhood. Again, he was feeling from time to time during his Sadhana, and very often after he had realized perfection, that the powers earned by long practice could be actually imparted to others or passed on to them. We have already indicated this faith here and there in many places.[1] On many occasions in his life till then, the Master also got the proof that the divine Mother, by Her grace, had accumulated that power abundantly in him, making him sometimes completely lose himself. She had used that power as the instrument with which to bestow Her grace on particular persons like Mathur and others. Consequently the Master had, till then, only the faith that the Universal Mother would bestow Her grace on some fortunate persons through his body and mind as instruments. He could not understand how or when She would bestow that grace of Hers, nor did the Master's mind, unhesitatingly dependent as it was on Her, like that of a child on its mother, make any effort to understand it. But never, in a dream even, did it cross his mind that religion should be imparted to all India and the world should be flooded with a strong current of spirituality. But now the Master began to feel in his

heart of hearts that the divine Mother, through his body and mind, had already started Her divine sport of imparting religion. But what was to be his means, though he felt thus? What could he do if the universal Mother did not allow him to know what She would make him do, where She would take him and along what path? For, he actually became the child of the divine Mother for ever, knowing only, "Mother is mine, I am Mother's." No desire whatever, except Mother's, arose in his mind. One desire only, however, arose in his mind from time to time—the desire that he should know the Mother in various forms and through various paths. But the Mother Herself had before that time made it very clear to him that it was She who had raised that desire in his mind. Therefore when this new experience now occurred, the child of the divine Mother cheerfully remained dependent on Her and Her alone, and She continued to play with him as before.

43. The Master did not, as is the case with us, assume the position of the spiritual teacher under the influence of egotism

We can clearly understand from his desire to spend the rest of his life at Vrindavan in the holy company of Gangamata, filling his mind with divine love, that when he realised the aforesaid truths during his visits to holy places, the Master did not assume the position of a spiritual teacher, like most of us, under the influence of egotism. We cannot grasp or understand even a fraction of the master's lifelong attitude. "Mother does Her own work. Who am I to work for the world and teach humanity?" But it was this very attitude that made him the wonderful instrument of the divine Mother's work. It was this very attitude that made it possible for him to remain in Bhavamukha incessantly and it was this very attitude that led to the wonderful manifestation of the mood of the Guru in his mind, which embodied itself, so to say, in his person. So long as the Master used to lose himself when that Power welled up in him, he could detect and understand what happened through the instrumentality of his body and mind only after the work had been accomplished. But now his body and mind got accustomed to contain and manifest that power without a break; it became easy and natural with him and he was always established in spite of himself

in the position of the true spiritual teacher. Before that time the normal state of the Master's mind was that of an humble aspirant or of a child; he then remained much longer in that mood and the manifestations of the Power as the Guru in him were few and far between. But now it was just the opposite; he remained much longer in the mood of the Guru and the manifestation of the humble attitude of an aspirant or of a child was correspondingly brief.

44. The proof thereof — the Master in Bhavamukha quarrelled with the Mother of the universe

It was absolutely impossible for the mind of the Master to assume the position of the spiritual teacher under the influence of egoism. Time and again we got the proof of it in the boyish "quarrels" of the Master in Bhavamukha with the divine Mother. Attracted by the manifestation of spirituality in the Master, big crowds gathered at Dakshineswar, like swarms of bees attracted by the perfume of full-blown hundred-petalled lotuses. Then, one day, we went and saw the Master in Bhavamukha speaking with the divine Mother. He said, "What art Thou doing? Shouldst Thou bring crowds of people like that? I find no time to bathe and have my meal." (The Master was then suffering from the pain in his throat.) He said with reference to his body, "It is nothing but a broken drum. If it is played on so much it will get perforated any day. What wilt Thou do then?"

45. The second example of it

On another occasion we were sitting beside him at Dakshineswar. It was the month of October of the year 1884. The news of the illness of Pratap Hazra's mother had come and the Master had persuaded him to go home to serve his mother. We were present on both the occasions. News came today that Pratap had gone to Vaidyanath instead of going home. The Master felt a little annoyed at that news. After we had had a short talk on this and that, the Master asked us to sing a song and was in ecstasy a little afterwards. On this occasion also the Master in ecstasy began, like a boy, to quarrel with the Mother of the universe. He said, "Why dost Thou bring such worthless wayward people here? (After a little silence) I cannot do so much. Let there

be at the most one-fourth or so of a seer of water to one seer of milk; but now it is not so; there are five seers of water to one seer of milk; my eyes are burning with smoke as I continue pushing the fuel into the fire. If Thou likest, go and give personally; I cannot do so much pushing of fuel into the fire; don't bring such people any more." Overwhelmed with awe and astonishment, we sat still thinking of whom the Master referred to, while speaking thus, and how unfortunate that person was. There daily arose such quarrels between the Mother and the Master, which showed that the Master asked the Mother every day to take back from him the position of the teacher, which he regarded as totally worthless, though others yearned for it, on account of the attendant honour.

46. The Master's realization: "Being an executive officer of the divine Mother's empire, I shall have to go to impose peace wherever troubles arise"

Thus did the universal Mother, the divine Will, in Her inscrutable play, make the Master have extraordinary, unprecedented experiences throughout his life. She created in him such an abundance of highly liberal, spiritual ideas as She had never done before in any other great teacher. Along with this fact, She showed him how much spiritual power She had accumulated in him as a blessing to humanity and how wonderful an instrument She had made of him for imparting that power to others. The Master was amazed to see an utter lack of spirituality in the world outside and through Her grace an accumulation of extraordinary power within him for the removal of that want. He could not fail to understand that in this age the Mother had once more taken the field for killing the indomitable Raktabija, the delusion produced by ignorance, that the people of the world would again be blessed to witness the sport of the Mother's welled-up compassion, and in joy and gratitude would not find words to sing hallelujah to Her, the arbiter of innumerable universes, and possessor of infinite auspicious qualities. Just as excess of heat generates clouds, waning is followed by waxing and prosperity comes on the trail of adversity, so, the long accumulated heart-felt want of the multitudinous people is followed by the incarnation of the divine Mother's infinite compassion in the person of the Guru, living and

moving with men. The Mother of the universe made this clear to the Master out of Her grace. She showed him again that such sport of Hers had been previously played with the Master many a time in many an age and would be played many a time over again in future. He was to have no liberation, as ordinary people have. He was “an executive officer who would have to rush to bring order wherever in the vast empire of the divine Mother, there was a breach of peace”. From these words of the Master, it is clear that he realized all this at this time and not before it.

47. The Master’s mind was eager to meet his devotees

Ever since he understood the fact that, for the good of humanity, the divine Mother Herself had, out of Her grace, produced in his mind, the liberal faith, “as many faiths so many paths,” the discerning mind of the Master applied itself to making inquiries about another matter. His mind then became anxious to know who the blessed persons were that would accept this new, liberal doctrine direct from the Mother Herself dwelling in the Master and mould their own lives accordingly and receiving power from Her, be singled out to be Her playmates in this novel sport of the modern age, in propagating this doctrine that would bring bliss to many. We said at the time of discussing the loving relation between Mathur and the Master that he had seen his devotees in visions.[1] On account of the inscrutable play of the universal Mother, their faces, seen before, now assumed bright living forms in the Master’s mind, so long absolutely unattached to all worldly things. That extraordinary Sannyasin’s mind now spent the days, he told us on many occasions afterwards, in variously pondering over how many they might be, whether now or how much later Mother would bring them there, which of them would perform some especial work of the Mother, whether Mother would make them renounce the world like him or keep them as householders, whether even one of the new-comers could have a complete and proper understanding of that play of the divine Mother, or whether they would have a partial understanding of it only, before they left, inasmuch as a few persons only in the world could so far understand a little of that extraordinary play of Hers. He said, “I then felt an indescribable yearning to see you all; the soul was being wrung like a piece of wet towel, so to say,

and I felt restless with pain. I felt like weeping. But I could not do so, lest that should create a scene; I controlled myself somehow. But when the day came to an end and night approached and Aratrika music began in the Mother's and Vishnu's temples I could no longer control myself thinking, 'One more day has passed away and they have not come.' I got up on the roof of the 'mansion', called you aloud, 'O my children, where are you? Come', and cried loudly. I felt I might go mad. Then, after long waiting, you at last started coming, one by one; it was then that I felt consoled. And as I had seen you all before, I could recognize you as you came, one after another. When Purna[1] came, Mother said, 'With his, the coming of those-of whom you have had vision is complete. No more will anyone of this class come.' Mother showed you all to me and said, 'All these are your devotees of the inner circle.' Wonderful is the vision and wonderful is its fulfilment." How little of this can we understand! We have quoted the Master's own words to show that nothing has been invented by anyone here.

48. The Master's conviction — all those who are living their last lives in the world will come "here"; those who even once have truly called on God cannot but come "here"

While he was thus gathering together the persons fit to realize and accept his own liberal doctrine, the Master had another conviction of which he personally told us now and again. He said, "All those who are living their final lives in the world will come here; and all those who have, even once, truly called on God cannot but come here". It is very difficult to say what different thoughts arose in the minds of the many people who heard this. Some came to the conclusion that it was absolutely unreasonable. Some thought it was only incoherent talk, an aberration of his faith and devotion. Some again found in it the proof of his egoism or a derangement of his brain. Others thought that though they could not understand it, it must be true inasmuch as the Master had said so and regarded reasoning and argumentation about it as harmful to faith, and would not set their critical spirit to work. Others again thought they would understand it only if the Master ever made it clear to them; they, therefore, would neither firmly believe nor disbelieve it and remained unmoved on hearing anyone

speaking either for or against it. But it will not take long to understand the meaning of these words of the Master, if we have succeeded in making it clear to the reader that the divine Mother made him realize Her own liberal doctrine and established him in the position of a teacher in a manner easy, natural and destitute of the slightest touch of egoism. That is, however, not all. If the reader looks a little below the surface, he will have realized that these very words are the proof that the Master attained that high spiritual state in an easy and natural way.

49. This conviction of the Master arose on account of his absolute dependence on the divine Mother

When the Master, the child of the divine Mother, looked into his body and mind, it never for a moment occurred to him, completely devoted as he was to Her, that the accumulation of that extraordinary spiritual power and the ability to impart it were the results of his own effort. In them he saw nothing but the sport of the universal Mother, playing an inscrutable play, and was astonished and astounded. Ah, what a great sport the Mother, expert in making the impossible possible, has made preparations for, having assumed that combination of body and mind of his, that unlettered personality! Ah, Her present play has surpassed a hundred, nay a thousand times, Her previous sports—making the dumb eloquent, the lame nimble enough to cross the mountain, which have charmed the people and led them to sing Her glory! By this play of the Mother, the Vedas, the Bible, the Puranas, the Koran and all other religious scriptures, have been proved to be true; religion has been established, and the crying need of the world, which no one could satisfy in the past ages, has once for all been satisfied! Bravo! Mother, bravo! O sportive Power of Brahman! There arose such thoughts in the Master's mind on account of that vision. The Master's mind took that vision to be absolutely true on account of its absolute faith in Mother's words, Her infinite grace and inscrutable power. He put questions to Her as to what the scope of that play was, who would assist in it and in what kinds of hearts the seed of that power would be sowed, and in answer to these questions he got the vision of the devotees of the inner circle and the conviction that those who were living their last lives and those who had

called on God sincerely even once in order to realize Him were the persons fit to accept that extraordinary, liberal, novel doctrine of the Master. That conclusion, it is clear, came as the result of his absolute dependence on the Mother of the universe. The boy depending entirely on the Mother could not arrive at any other conclusion than that; and because of this, he ever remained absolutely untouched by egoism.

50. The meaning of these words of the Master

In the sentences, “Those who are living their final lives shall come here,” and “Those who have even once called sincerely on God cannot but come here”, if the word “here” is taken to mean “to the Mother’s novel, liberal doctrine”, it will not be unreasonable and nobody will have any objection. But as soon as this meaning is accepted, another question is bound to crop up; will they of themselves accept the divine Mother’s liberal doctrine of “As many faiths, so many paths”, or will it be with the help of him through whose instrumentality She promulgated for the first time that doctrine in the world? The answer to this question, according to our understanding, should be determined by observing the result of the right realization of this doctrine in the heart of the questioner or anybody else. And until that realization comes silence is the best answer. But if the reader asks what our conception is, it has to be said that simultaneously with the right realization of that doctrine you will also attain the vision of him whom the divine Mother has, for the first time, brought to the world as the embodiment of that doctrine, and you will of your own accord pour your heart-felt love and reverence to his form, which is “free from pride and delusion.” The Master will not ask for it and no one else either will ask you. You will of your own accord offer it out of love for the Mother. It is needless to say anything more on this subject.

51. The concentrated state of the mood of the Guru is what is called the Divya-bhava, the divine state, in the Tantras. How the Gurus established in the divine state initiate their disciples

The authors of the Tantras have said again and again that when the mood of the Guru becomes normal and natural in any person or, in other words, his personality assumes a concentrated form of it by the will of the divine Mother, his actions, deportment, behaviour and manifestation of selfless compassion to others, take wonderful forms beyond the grasp of the human intelligence Such manifestation of it is called in the Tantras the divine state. Those scriptures also say that the teaching, initiation, etc., of others by those persons who are inspired by that mood are accomplished in unimaginable ways beyond the prescriptions of the scriptures. They can, out of compassion, awaken the power of spirituality in any one and put him instantly in ecstasy at their mere will or by touch or partially awakening that power in him can so ordain that it will be completely kindled in this life and make him feel blessed by realizing true spirituality. In a slightly intensified state of the spiritual mood, the teacher, say the Tantras, is able to impart Sakti initiation to the disciple and in its highly intensified state, he can impart the Sambhavi initiation. Ordinary teachers are enjoined by the Tantras to impart Mantri or Manavi initiation. As regards Sakti and Sambhavi initiation, the *Rudrayamala,* the *Shadanwaya Maharatna,* the *Vayaviya Samhita,* the *Sarada,* the *Viswasara* and other Tantras have all said the same thing. We quote here the verses from the *Vayaviya Samhita:*

‘Sambhavi chaiva Sakti cha Mantri chaiva Sivagame
Dikshopadisyate tredha Sivena paramatmana
Guroralokamatrena sparsat sambhashanadapi
Sadyah samjnya bhavejjantor diksha sa Sambhavi mata
Sakti jnanavati diksha shishyadeham pravisati
Guruna jnanamargena kriyate jnanachakshusha
Mantri kriyavati diksha kumbhamandalapurvika.’

52. The realizing of divine knowledge by the disciple as soon as he sees, touches and salutes the Guru is called the Sambhavi initiation. And the realization of that knowledge by the disciple on account of the power of the Guru entering his body is known as Sakti initiation

That is, Siva, the supreme Self, has taught in the

Agama scripture three kinds of initiation, namely, the Sambhavi, the Sakti and the Mantri. The Sambhavi initiation produces knowledge in the Jiva as soon as he sees, touches and salutes the Guru. In the Sakti initiation the Guru, with the help of this divine knowledge, makes his own power enter the disciple and awakens spirituality in his heart. The Mantri initiation consists of uttering the Mantra into the ear of the disciple after drawing a diagram, installing a jar, and performing the worship of the deity and so on.

The *Rudrayamala* says that the Sakti and Sambhavi initiations produce immediate liberation :

Sakti cha Sambhavi chanya sadyomuktividhayini

* * * *

Siddhaya swasaktinialokya taya kevalaya sisoh
Nirupayam krita diksha Sakteyi parikirtita
Abhisandhim vinacharya sishyayorubhayorapi
Deshikanugrahenaiva Sivata vyaktikarini

That is, the generating of the divine knowledge in the disciple by perfected souls with the help of their spiritual power alone, without adopting any external means, is called the Sakti initiation. In the Sambhavi initiation there exists no previous desire in the mind either of the teacher or of the disciple to impart initiation or receive it. As soon as they see each other, the teacher suddenly has compassion roused in his heart and he feels a desire to bestow his grace on the disciple. And that alone produces the knowledge of the non-dual Reality in the disciple, who thereby accepts discipleship.

The Tantra, *Pwascharanollasa,* says that, in that kind of initiation, there is no need of discrimination between the proper and improper times prescribed by the Sastras.

Dikshayam chanchalapangi na kalaniyamah kvachit
Sadgurordarsanadeva suryaparve cha sarvada.
Sishyamahuya guruna kripaya yadi diyate
Tatra lagnadikam kinchit na vicharyam kadachana.

53. In that kind of initiation there in no need of discrimination between proper and improper time

That is, O Parvati of restless eyes, there is no need to discriminate between proper and improper time for being initiated by Gurus endowed with the heroic and the divine mood. If any one has the privilege of meeting the Guru possessing the knowledge of Brahman, and the Guru mercifully invites him to be initiated, he should receive it without paying any heed to auspicious or inauspicious moments, etc.

54. The Master is the best of all spiritual teachers endowed with the divine mood. The reason thereof

The Sastras have averred that such is the case with even ordinary spiritual teachers endowed with the divine mood; so how can we prescribe the method of teaching others and imparting the power of spirituality to them out of selfless compassion on the part of this divine Master, who was in all respects an instrument in the hands of the universal Mother for that purpose? For, it was not an ordinary play of the divine mood spoken of in the Tantras, that the universal Mother residing in the Master's body and mind was then playing out of Her grace. But it was also for the good of all humanity, since She was then manifesting through him that great liberal doctrine, "As many faiths, so many paths", which had not been practised or realized so far by any spiritual teacher possessed of the divine mood. Therefore we say that henceforward a new chapter opened in the Master's life.

55. All the powers are not always manifested in the incarnations of God. The proof thereof

The reader devoted to the Master will look askance at us perhaps on hearing these words of ours and say, "How unreasonable! If you regard the Master as an incarnation of God, you cannot say that the said idea or the manifestation of that power was absent in him at any time." We reply: Brother, we say so on the very evidence of the Master's words. When they assume human bodies, even incarnations of God do not have all kinds of

divine moods or powers always manifested in them; whenever any mood or power becomes necessary, it comes. When the Master's body was reduced to a mere skeleton on account of the long struggle with the disease at Kasipur garden, the Master noticed his mental attitude and the manifestation of power in him and said to us:

"What the Mother shows to me is that such a power has come into this (his body) that I need not even touch people any more. I'll ask you to touch them and they will get awakened even by your touch. If the Mother brings this (his body) round this time, so many people will come that you will not be able to push back the crowd from the door. You will have to undergo such a physical strain that you will have to take medicine to cure the pain in your bodies."

From these words, spoken by the Master himself, it is clear that he was then feeling within himself the manifestation of a power which he had never felt before. Many such examples of this may be given.

56. The Master met Kesav Chandra, the great devotee. His own devotee came shortly after

The Master could not free himself from anxiety by only calling for the devotees eagerly in the aforesaid manner under the impulse of the divine mood. But the Mother spoke to his heart of hearts, assuring him that almost all his devotees could know of his stay at Dakshineswar, if that news reached a certain place, namely the garden of Belgharia, and the divine Mother took him there and introduced him to Sri Kesav Chandra Sen. Shortly after this event, the devotees Vivekananda, Brahmananda and others, who had been seen by the Master in ecstasy before, and who were especially fit to be blessed by his grace, began to come one after another. If the Master makes us tell the reader the story of his play with them in the divine mood, we shall do so on some other occasion. We shall now place before the reader, as an example, a picture of the manner in which, under the influence of that extraordinary divine mood, he spent a few days with his devotees during the car festival in the year 1885, and bring to a close this part of the book.

Footnote

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson—“Consciousness ever moves along a graded plane.”

1. A jar, filled with water and covered with green twigs along with leaves, flowers and a fruit, is invariably placed in front of an image.—Tr.

1. Asked about it, the author said, “The Master saw a stone jump from one place to another.”—Tr.

1. That is, she was a living deity, holding communication with human beings in various ways and helping them in their difficulties.—Tr.

1. This word was one of those which the Master spoke in English.—Tr.

1. III. 6 and 7.

1. III. 7. 33.

1. The name Purna literally means complete.—Tr.

CHAPTER V
SRI RAMAKRISHNA IN THE COMPANY OF DEVOTEES FOR NINE DAYS: THE NAVAYATRA IN A.D. 1885

> He soon becomes righteous and attains eternal peace. Proclaim, O son of Kunti, that my devotee is never destroyed.
>
> — Gita IX. 31

If one wants to understand a little of the wonderful character of Sri Ramakrishna established in Bhavamukha, one should see him in the company of his devotees. A little of his play in that mood will be comprehended when one knows and deeply understands how and in what different moods he used daily to stand and sit, speak and talk, joke and laugh and experience ecstasy in the company of his devotees of various natures. We shall present the reader here with the story of such play of the Master for a few days with the devotees.

1. The harmony of the divine and human natures in the Master

Even very trifling acts and efforts of this extraordinary soul were not, so far as we know, aimless or useless. It is extremely rare to find such an extraordinary harmony of divine and human natures in any one else. We, on our part, have not met such another, during our travel in many places of the world for the last twenty-five years. “One does not understand the value of teeth as long as they are there”, runs a Bengali proverb; it has exactly been so with many of us with regard to the Master. When the devotees had brought him for the treatment of his throat-disease to Shyampukur in

Calcutta for some time, one day Sri Vijaykrishna Goswami came to see him and said to us the following words:

2. Vijaykrishna Goswami's vision

While meditating in his own room with closed doors during his stay at Dacca a few days previously, Vijay had had the vision of Sri Ramakrishna and, in order to know whether it was a fancy of his brain, tested it by continually pressing for a long time the body and the limbs of the form that was before him with his own hands. He mentioned this fact openly to the Master and us that day. "I have travelled", said Sri Vijay, "in various parts of the country, on hills and mountains, and seen many great holy souls, but I have never met such a one (showing the Master) anywhere else. I have seen somewhere two annas, somewhere one anna, somewhere one pie and somwhere half a pie of the power that I see fully manifested here; I have not seen even four annas anywhere." "What does he say?" said the Master to us smiling. "The other day", said Vijay to the Master, "I saw you at Dacca in such a way that I'll not believe you if you say 'no'. It is only because you are so easily available that you have created so much confusion. Dakshineswar is very near to Calcutta; we can come and pay a visit to you whenever we like. There is also no trouble in coming here—there are enough boats and carriages. We are unable to understand you only because you are thus so easily available near home. If you had been sitting on the peak of a mountain and one had to meet you after walking a long distance without food and climbing the high altitude by clambering up the roots of trees, one would have understood your worth; but now, because such a one exists near home, we think that better ones are there in remote places, a great way off. This is why we run hither and thither to experience endless troubles."

3. What the devotees felt at the Master's extraordinary behaviour with them

It is truly so. The compassionate Master received as his own almost all those who came to him and did not part company with them even if they

tried to do so. He endowed them with eternal peace by withering and burning up now with a heavy hand, now with a gentle smile, the impressions accumulated in their past lives and by casting them anew into new forms after his unprecedented ambrosial pattern. There will remain no doubt about it, if devotees tell plainly the stories of their own lives. Overwhelmed with worldly sufferings and out of wounded feelings—because, though he had taken refuge in the divine Lord so long ago, he had not realized Him, and the Master also had not done anything for him—Narendranath secretly made himself ready to renounce the world, when the Master, it was seen, did not allow him to do so. Knowing his intention through his divine power, he persuaded him to come to Dakshineswar with him that day and touching his person afterwards, sang in a spiritual mood, "I am afraid to speak and also not to speak; I am afraid, lest I should lose you, O Rai." And instead of allowing him to renounce the world and go away, he kept him with him consoling him in various ways. Although he had the aim of his life fulfilled by the Master's accepting his "power of attorney", Girish retained the force of his past impressions and was unable to shake off his fear and anxiety on that account. Then we see again the Master, granting him freedom from fear with these words, "Is it a water-snake, O wretch, that has caught you? You have been caught by a venomous snake—you have to die, even if you flee into your hole. Have you-not noticed that, caught by water-snakes, frogs croak a thousand times before they die; and some of them are able to free themselves and flee; but, when caught by cobras and black-snakes, they have not to croak more than three times, the struggle being over by that time; if, however, a rare one flees by chance, it dies even after it has re-entered its hole. Know, the same is the case here." But who then understood the meaning and the purpose of those words and actions of the Master? Every one thought, perhaps, that persons like him existed everywhere. Just as the Master was humouring everybody's whim and was going about, unasked, from door to door with his free gift of boons and freedom from fear in his hands, so, everybody thought that there were persons in plenty of this nature to be met with everywhere. Sheltered by the compassionate Master's affectionate wing, how strong the devotees felt, how insistent they were on the satisfaction of their childish whims and how easily they felt wounded! Almost all felt that the practice of religion was a very easy thing. It was quite certain that they could realize any mood

or vision whatever in the spiritual realm at any time they liked. There was nothing more necessary than to ask the Master importunately for it with a little eagerness—the Master would easily make them attain it immediately by his touch or words or will only!

4. Swami Premananda asked the Master importunately for Bhavasamadhi. The Master's anxiety and vision

Baburam, afterwards known as Swami Premananda, had the desire to have ecstasy. He went to the Master and said to him importunately weeping, "Do secure it for me." The Master consoled him and said, "Yes, I'll ask Mother; does anything happen by my will, my child?" But he scarcely gave ear to what the Master said. Baburam repeated the same words, "Do secure it for me." A few days after he made that importunate prayer, Baburam had to go to Antpur, his native village, on some business. It was the year 1884. In the meantime, the Master was anxiously wondering how Baburam was to have his ecstasy. He said to this person and that person, "Baburam wept much and asked for ecstasy before he left—what will happen? If he does not have it, he will have no regard for the words of this place (meaning himself)." He then said to the divine Mother, "Please ordain, Mother, that Baburam may have a little Bhava or other spiritual experience." The Mother replied, "He will not have Bhava. He will have knowledge." The Master was again anxious when he heard those words of the universal Mother. He went the length of saying to some of us with deep concern, "I told Mother what Baburam asked for; but She said, 'He will have no Bhava, he will have knowledge.' Anyway, let him have at least that, so that he may have peace; that is all; I was much worried for him. He wept bitterly before he left." Ah, how anxious he felt in order that Baburam might have some kind of spiritual experience! Again, while expressing that anxiety, how the Master repeated the words, "If that does not come to pass, he will have no regard for the words of this place", as if the Master's life and all depended on Baburam's regard or disregard!

5. The Master explained why he felt anxious for the devotees. When Hazra asked him not to be anxious for them he had a vision and replied to

him accordingly

He said now and then with reference to the boy-devotees, “Well, can you tell me why I feel so very anxious for all these and think about what one has realised and another has not and so on? They are mere ‘schoolboys’;[1] they are penniless, they have not the means of offering me a piceworth of sugar-plum. Why do I still feel so very anxious for them? If anyone does not visit this place even for two days, my heart immediately feels extremely restless to see him and have news of him. Why is it so?” The boy, so asked, perhaps answered, “I do not know, sir, why it happens; but, it is surely for their good that you feel like that.”

The Master said, “The reason is this; these are all pure in heart. Lust and gold have not yet touched them. If they apply their minds to God, they will be able to realize Him. Mine is the nature of a hemp-smoker. A hemp-smoker does not find satisfaction in smoking hemp all alone; it is necessary for him to hand over the bowl to another when he enjoys the intoxication, so is it with me. Although it is so with regard to all the boys, I don’t feel so much for anyone as I do for Naren. If he should be late by two days, my heart would feel the pain of being wrung like a towel. Thinking what others would say, I went aside under the Tamarisk trees[1] and wept loudly. Hazra[2] said (at one time), ‘What is this strange nature of yours? You are in the state of a Paramahamsa; why do you worry yourself over, why has Narendra not come, what will happen to Bhavanath? and so on, instead of remaining identified with the divine Lord by applying your mind to Him in Samadhi?’ Then I thought he was right and that I must not do so again. When afterwards I was coming back from under the Tamarisk trees, I was shown (by Mother) a vivid picture of Calcutta, as if the city was present before me and all the people were night and day immersed in lust and gold and were suffering miserably. When I saw it, compassion welled up in my heart. I thought, ‘Were I to suffer a million times greater misery for the good of these people, most gladly will I do that.’ I returned and said to Hazra, ‘I choose to think of them; what is that to you, wretch?’ ”

6. Swami Vivekananda asked the Master not to do so. The Master’s vision and reply

"Naren said at one time, 'Why do you think so much of Narendar?[3] If you do so excessively, you will have to become like Narendar. King Bharata continually thought of a deer and had to be born a deer.' I have, you know, much faith in Naren's words. I was afraid to hear this. I reported it to Mother. She said, 'He is a mere boy; why do you give ear to his words? You see Narayana in him; therefore you feel attracted towards him.' I was much relieved to hear it. I came and said to Naren, 'I don't take your words seriously; Mother has said that I feel attracted towards you because I see Narayana in you; I'll not even look at your face, wretch, the day I shall not feel His presence in you.' " So each action of the wonderful Master was strange to us but had a meaning; and he used to explain it to us lest we should think otherwise and be harmed.

7. The Master honoured persons of respectability and good qualities—its reason

We saw the Master always value the good qualities of all persons and pay due respect to men of honour. He said, "The divine Lord is displeased if due respect is not paid to men of honour. It is by His power that they have risen to rank and position; it is He who has made them such. When they are dishonoured, He is slighted." Therefore, whenever he heard of a man of special good qualities residing anywhere, we found the Master eager to see him somehow or other. If the person came to the Master, well and good; otherwise, he would himself go to him uninvited, meet, salute and converse with him; then thus satisfied, he would return. He heard of the especial good qualities of Padmalochan, the court-pandit of the prince of Burdwan, Pandit Isvarchandra Vidyasagar, Mahesh, the famous Vina-player of Kasi, Gangamata of Vrindavan, who was inspired with the spiritual mood of a friend of God, Kesav Sen, the eminent devotee and innumerable others, whose names might be mentioned. He sought each of them out and himself went to their doors to see them.

8. To what length the Master went to free himself from egoism

It is, of course, no wonder that the Master went unasked to anyone's door. There never arose in the Master's mind such egotistic ideas as "I am so great a man", "I shall lower myself in the estimation of others if I thus go to any and every man", "I will lose respect", and so on and so forth. For, he had altogether burnt up pride and egoism to ashes for ever. He carried on his head the leaf-plates, out of which the poor people had taken their food, threw them outside the temple, and washed clean the place. At one time he even partook of the leavings of those people, regarding them as Narayana Himself. Again, he washed and cleaned with his hair[1] the place where the temple servants answered the calls of nature and prayed earnestly to the divine Mother, "Mother, see that I may never entertain the idea that I am superior to them." Therefore, we are not at all surprised to see that extraordinary lack of egoism in him, though we cry out "wonderful", when we see others surrendering their egoism even to the smallest degree, for, the Master was indeed not a person of this world like ourselves.

9. The events concerning Dr. Kailas and Trailokya Babu are examples of the Master's lack of egoism

Throwing the end of the front fold of his lower garment on his shoulder, the Master was once walking in the garden of the Kali temple. A gentleman thought he was an ordinary gardener and said to him, "Hallo, just pluck those flowers for me." The Master did not utter a word, did what he was told and slipped away from that place. Once the late Trailokya Babu, son of Mathur Babu, became annoyed with Hriday, the nephew of the Master, and ordered him to leave the temple. In his rage, he gave an indication to others that the Master also need not stay at the temple any longer. As soon as this reached the Master's ears, he placed his towel on his shoulder smiling and was immediately ready to leave the place. He had gone almost to the gate when, afraid that evil might befall him, Trailokya Babu came up to him and requested him to come back saying, "I did not mean that you should leave; why are you going away?" The Master also came back smiling as before, entered his room and sat down, as if nothing had happened.

10. Worldly people behave in a contrary way

Many such examples can be given. We do not feel so much astonished at such actions of the Master, though we applaud greatly a man of the world whose conduct remotely resembles his. For, we have once for all unalterably settled in our minds—whether we say it in so many words or not—that, if we want to live in the world, we must look to our own interests, elbow out the weak to clear our own path, proclaim unabashedly our own glory and conceal as far as possible our own weaknesses from others. We think that one will be condemned to become absolutely useless and good for nothing, if one is sincere and depends wholly on or believes in God or man. And it is a thousand pities that the case is the same with politics, social etiquette, individual morals, international policies, and so on. Even those who have not eaten your Dead Sea fruit repent, let alone those who have eaten it.

11. Religious movements about the time of the Master's birth. Their causes

It was the year 1885. That was a time when the Master had become very well known. Attracted wonderfully towards him, many newcomers came daily to Dakshineswar then, and had the privilege of seeing him and feeling blessed. Everybody, old and young, in Calcutta, had then heard the name of the "Paramahamsa of Dakshineswar" and many had seen him also. And flooding the minds of the generality of the people of Calcutta, a religious current was incessantly flowing, of course, a little below the surface. The city of Calcutta was then filled with a Harisabha here,[1] a Brahmo Samaj there, singing of God's names here, an expounding of religious doctrines there and so on and so forth. The Master knew well the cause, though others did not. He spoke about it now and then to us as well as to other devotees of both sexes. A woman devotee tells us that one day the Master said to her in this connection, "Hallo! Know that the many Hari-sabhas and the other religious institutions that you see are due to this (referring to his own person). Did they formerly exist? Everything had been lifeless, but since this (referring to his person again) came, all these have come to life again and a current of religion is now flowing just a little below the surface." On another occasion the Master said to us, "Did the young Bengal, that you see,

care for devotion and such other things? They did not even know how to salute with their heads bent. I went on saluting them with my head bent and then they gradually learnt how to bow down their heads in salutation. I went to Kesav's house to see him. I saw him sitting in a chair. I saluted him with my head bent. At that, he just gave a nod in return. At the time of my leaving later on, I saluted him with my head completely touching the ground. He then folded his hands and once touched his head with them. The more the intercourse between us increased, the more he listened to talks and the more I saluted him with my head bent, the more did he begin to bow down his head in salutation. Did they otherwise know devotion and such other things or had they any regard for them?"

12. Pandit Sasadhar came to Calcutta at that time. His exposition of religion

When the Brahmo Samaj, called the New Dispensation, had the company of the Master, and big congregations were gathering in Calcutta, Pandit Sasadhar came there for the purpose of giving expositions of the Hindu religion and trying to explain the daily religious duties of the Hindus from the standpoint of Western science. The saying, "As many sages, so many opinions" is always true in all matters. The Pandit's scientific exposition of religion was not an exception to this. But, in spite of that there was no lack of an audience. There were great crowds of clerks and others returning from office and of the students of schools and colleges. The Albert Hall, where he used to explain orthodox Hinduism, was packed with people. Every one was calm and eager to hear at least a little of the extraordinary exposition of religion by the Pandit. We remember that one day we also stood in that way for some time and heard a few words. On one occasion we too thrust in our heads with difficulty and had the privilege of seeing somehow the elderly Pandit's beautiful face, adorned with a black beard, and a part of his breast bedecked with ochre coloured Rudraksha-beads. The exposition of religion by Pandit Sasadhar was the one talk everywhere in Calcutta.

13. The Master's desire to see Sasadhar

Words travel by ears, as they say. It was, therefore, not long before the news of the great soul of Dakshineswar reached the Pandit and that of the accomplishments of the Pandit reached the Master. Some of the devotees came to the Master and stated, “He is a great scholar and also speaks well. The other day he explained the couplet on Hari consisting of thirty-two letters, to mean the Devi. All heard and cried ‘Bravo’.” The Master heard this and said, “Is that so? I feel like hearing it once.” Saying so, the Master expressed to the devotees a desire to see the Pandit.

14. The desire that arose in the pure mind of the Master was always fulfilled

When any desire arose in the pure mind of the Master, it could not but be fulfilled somehow or other. Some unseen power cleared the path to its fulfilment by removing all the obstacles to it. It is true, we heard before, that constantly entertaining sacred and pure ideas in the mind and being always truthful in body, mind and speech, man reaches a state where he can in no way have any kind of false idea in his mind even if he makes an effort; whatever desire arises in his mind then becomes fulfilled in due course; but we could never lead ourselves to believe that it would be possible with a mortal man. We came gradually to believe, in it on seeing the desires of the Master’s mind being fulfilled over and over again in unexpected ways. But, in spite of that fact, did we have perfect faith in him during the lifetime of the Master? He said, “I saw within Kesav and Vijay flames of knowledge flickering like those of lamps but in Naren I saw the very sun of knowledge.” “Kesav”, continued he, “has stirred up the world with one power; Naren has eighteen such powers in him.” Those words were not the expression of the mere thoughts of his mind; they were his experiences in ecstasy. But did we even then have perfect faith in them? Sometimes, we thought, “It may be true; he sees people’s hearts; when he says so, there is some mystery hidden in it.” Again, sometimes we wondered, “What a great difference is there between the world-renowned Kesav Chandra Sen, the eloquent devotee, and a mere school-boy like Narendra! Can what the Master has said about them be true?” When we had such doubts about the facts of the Master’s experiences, how can we say

that there arose no doubt in our minds about the fulfilment of his desires which he expressed as simply as we do, “I have this desire”?

* * * *

15. The places where the Master went on the occasion of the Navayatra of the year 1885

The time of Sri Jagannath’s Rathayatra (chariot festival), arrived a few days after the Master had had a talk about Pandit Sasadhar. It is called “Navayatra”[1], on account of the chariot festival continuing for nine days. Many things about the Master during the Navayatra of 1885 now arise in our memory. In deference to the etiquette of responding to an invitation, he went to the house of Ishan Chandra Mukhopadhyaya of Thanthania, on the morning of the day of the forward trip of the chariot in that year and went from there to see Pandit Sasadhar in the afternoon. The Master participated in the Chariot festival after sunset at Balaram Babu’s Baghbazar house, where he spent the night. On the morrow, he came back to Dakshineswar with a few devotees in a boat. Shortly afterwards Pandit Sasadhar came to a certain place at Alambazar, otherwise called north-Baranagar, to lecture on religion and from there came to the Kali temple at Dakshineswar to pay a visit to the Master. Afterwards, on the morning of the day of the return trip of the chariot, the Master came again to the Baghbazar house of Balaram and stayed there delightedly with the devotees for that night and the following day and night. He returned by boat to Dakshineswar on the morning of the third day with Gopala’s mother and some other devotees. On the day of the return chariot trip, Pandit Sasadhar came to Balaram Babu’s house to see the Master and, dissolved in tears, prayed to him with folded hands, “My heart has dried up by discussing philosophy; please endow me with a drop of devotion.” The Master entered into ecstasy and touched the Pandit’s heart that day. It will not be out of place here to give in detail an account of the events of that time.

16. About Ishan Babu

In the morning, when the chariot started, the Master, it was mentioned before, came to Ishan Babu's house at Thanthania in Calcutta. With him were Yogen, Hazra and a few other devotees. Rarely does one meet with a devotee, kind and liberal like Ishan, having so great a faith in God. His three or four sons were all educated. The third son, Satish, was a fellow-pupil of Narendra. As Satish was a great expert on the Pakhoaj, the sweet voice of Narendra was very often heard from that house. Speaking of the kindness of Ishan Babu, one day Swami Vivekananda said to us, "It was by no means less than that of Pandit Vidyasagar." The Swami saw with his own eyes Ishan Babu give on many occasions the whole of his own meal of rice and other preparations (there being no other food ready at home) to beggars, and go practically without food. The Swami also said that he saw Ishan Babu shedding tears many a time at others' sufferings, the removal of which, he found, was beyond his power. Ishan was not only kind but equally devoted to Japa. Many of us knew that he practised Japa from sunrise to sunset regularly at Dakshineswar. He was very dear to and a favourite with the Master. After finishing his Japa one day, Ishan came, we remember, to offer his salutation at the feet of the Master, who in ecstasy placed his holy foot on Ishan's head. When afterwards the Master regained normal consciousness, he said emphatically to Ishan, "O Brahmin, dive, dive deep." (that is 'be absorbed in the name of God instead of practising Japa superficially'). Ishan's Japa and morning worship at that time continued till four in the afternoon, when he took a light meal. He spent his time till sunset in talking with others or in listening to devotional songs, and then sat for his evening Japa for several hours. His sons took upon themselves the responsibility of looking after his worldly affairs. The Master blessed Ishan's house now and then with his holy presence. Ishan also during his stay in Calcutta came to see him at Dakshineswar very often or went to the sacred temples or places of pilgrimage and spent his time in practising austerities.

On the day of the chariot festival this year, 1885, the Master came to Ishan's house and had a talk on religion with some scholars of Bhatpara. Swami Vivekananda said that Pandit Sasadhar was staying in the neighbourhood. On hearing that, the Master went to see him that day. The Swami had come to know that the Pandit was in Calcutta, for he was

already acquainted with those at whose respectful invitation the Pandit had come to lecture on religion and frequented their College Street house. Again, as the Swami was convinced that the Pandit's figurative exposition of religion was full of errors, he came a little more frequently to that house with a view to reason it out to the Pandit. Swami Brahmananda says that he (Swami Vivekananda) knew many things about the Pandit and told them to the Master, who, at his request, went with him to see the Pandit, and gave the Pandit much valuable instruction on that occasion. The Master told the Pandit during his very first visit to him that if one makes an attempt to preach religion without having the "badge", the power of authority, from the Mother of the universe, it becomes fruitless and increases one's pride and egoism and sometimes leads one to ruin. It was, it is needless to say, as the result of these glowing, powerful words, that the Pandit gave up preaching a little later and went to Kamakhyapitha to practise austerities.

17. Swami Yogananda's devotion to established rites and practices

The Master took leave of the Pandit that day and went with Yogen to Balaram Babu's house at Baghbazar in the evening. Yogen was then so much devoted to established rites and practices that he did not take even water in anybody's house. He, therefore, took light refreshments at home before he came with the Master, who on his part also never requested him to take food anywhere; for, Yogen's devotion to established rites and practices was not unknown to him. He knew also that Yogen used to take fruits, milk, sweets, etc., in Balaram's house, because Balaram Babu, Yogen found, had love and devotion to, God and reverence for the Master. Therefore, a little after his arrival, the Master said to Balaram and the others, "He (Yogen) has not taken anything today; please give him something to eat." Balaram Babu took him lovingly to the inner apartment and gave him a light meal. We mention this here as one of the examples of how great was the Master's observation of the mental and physical conditions of the devotees although he was often absorbed in ecstasy.

There flowed a ceaseless current of bliss in the company of the Master during the chariot festival at Balaram Babu's house. Immediately after sunset, the holy image of Jagannath was adorned with garlands, sandal-

paste, etc., and brought out from the shrine in the inner apartment. It was placed on the small chariot, already bedecked with cloth and flags and was worshipped again. Sri Fakir, who belonged to Balaram Babu's priestly family and was a devotee of the Master, performed this worship.

When studying at school, Fakir, who devoutly conformed to religious practices, lived under the care of Balaram Babu and looked after the study of the latter's only son Ramakrishna. He had great devotion to the Master from the day he first saw him. The Master loved to hear hymns etc., recited by him. One day he taught Fakir how to recite properly the hymn to Kali by Acharya Sankara. At sunset on that occasion, the Master took him to the northern verandah of the room in which he stayed, touched him in ecstasy and asked him to meditate. As a result, Fakir had wonderful visions and other experiences.

18. The Chariot festival at Balaram Babu's house

The chariot now began to be drawn forward to the accompaniment of Sankirtan, the singing of God's glory. The Master himself took hold of the rope attached to the chariot and pulled it for a short time. Afterwards, he danced beautifully to the music. Charmed with that dance and the exciting roar arising out of spiritual emotion born of Sankirtan, all lost themselves in the love of God. Dancing;, singing and pulling the chariot, all went for a long time round and round, along the verandah of the outer apartment on the first floor, overlooking the courtyard below. With salutations, the Kirtan was then brought to a close with the uttering of "Jay" (victory), separately taking the names of Jagannath, Govinda, Radharani, Chaitanya and the devotees of his inner circle and others. The holy image of Jagannath was then brought down from the chariot and installed for seven days in a different place, a small room on the second floor over the flight of steps. It was as if Jagannath had made a chariot-journey to a different place and he would have a returnjourney to his own place again after seven days. After Jagannath had been installed in the place mentioned before, an offering of food was made and Prasada was given first to the Master and then to others. The Master and Yogen passed that night at the house of Balaram Babu. Many of the other devotees went home.

19. The women devotee's devotion to the Master

At eight or nine on the morrow a boat was engaged; the Master would go back to Dakshineswar. When the boat came, the Master went to the inner apartment and paid his obeisance to Sri Jagannath. He received the salutations of the family of the devotees and was coming towards the outer apartment, when women devotees followed him to the end of the roof in front of the kitchen situated on the eastern side of the inner apartment, from where they went back with sad hearts; for, which is the mind that would like to part with that wonderful living god? Taking a few steps forward from there, and then going up three or four steps, one found a door beyond which was the verandah on the first floor, overlooking the courtyard below. Though all other women devotees returned from the end of that roof, one of them forgot herself, as it were, and followed him to the said verandah, as if she was not at all conscious of the presence of unknown people there.

20. The Master walked along with indrawn mind and a woman devotee, who forgot herself, followed him

After the Master had taken leave of the women devotees, he, in spiritual mood, walked along with such indrawn mind that he did not at all know that the ladies followed him for a certain distance and then returned and that one of them was even then following him that way. Those only who with their own eyes have seen the Master walking in that manner will be able to understand it; it is difficult to explain it to others. As the result of practising mental concentration for twelve years, nay for the whole of his life, the Master's mind and intellect became so very one-pointed that they remained exactly where they were placed or exactly in whatever action they were employed; they did not at all digress in any other direction. Again, his body and senses were so much under control that they expressed to the utmost the emotion present in the mind for the time being; they could not play pranks with him. It is very difficult to explain this, for, when we look at our own minds, we find that they are the battlegrounds of contending thoughts; and that, led by habits, our bodies and senses run after the powerful impulses in spite of our best efforts to curb them. So very different are the constitutions of the Master's mind and our mind!

21. A few more examples of the Master's walking along with in-drawn mind. Its reason

Many more events can be mentioned here as examples of this: The Master started from his own room at Dakshineswar to pay his obeisance to Mother Kali. He came to the eastern verandah of his room, got down the steps to the courtyard of the temple and went straight towards the Kali temple. The temple of Radha-Govinda was on the way to that temple; while going to the Kali temple, he might, if he so chose, first enter the temple of Radha-Govinda, pay his obeisance to the holy image-and then go to the temple of Mother Kali; but he could never do that. He went direct to the temple of Kali and made his obeisance there. He would go to the temple of Radha-Govinda only on his way back. We thought in those days that the Master did so because he loved Mother Kali more. One day, the Master himself said, "Hallo, can you tell me why it is so? When I intend to go to the temple of Mother Kali, I have to go there absolutely direct. It becomes impossible for me to go there after taking a stroll this side or that side or after going to the temple of Radha-Govinda and making my obeisances there. Someone, as it were, drags me by my feet and takes me direct to the temple of Mother Kali and does not allow me to bend even a little this way or that. I can go wherever I like after I see Mother Kali. Can you tell me why it is so?" We confessed our ignorance, but thought to ourselves, "Is it possible? He can first pay his obeisance to Radha-Govinda if he likes and then go to the Kali temple. But it is so perhaps because his desire to see Mother Kali is more powerful." But, we could not speak it out openly all at once. The Master himself sometimes answered the questions thus, "Do you see? I have to do a thing just whenever I have a mind to do it; the slightest delay can't lie brooked." Who knew then that a one-pointed mind had to be in that state and behave that way? Who knew that the Master's mind had long become absolutely one-pointed, leaving no loop-hole anywhere, and that all crosscurrents of thoughts and sentiments had long been stopped and there remained only one master-current there? Again, he sometimes said, "Look here; when I am in the Nirvikalpa state of consciousness, nothing remains—neither 'I' nor 'you', neither seeing nor hearing, neither speaking nor keeping mum; even when I come down two or three steps from there, I have so much of divine intoxication that I cannot turn my attention to a

multitude of persons or things. If I sit down to take my meal at that time and I am given a meal of fifty dishes, my hand would not go towards them all; it will take food to the mouth from one spot only of one plate. Such states come, when rice, pulses, vegetables, rice-porridge—all must be mixed together and then taken." We were astounded to hear of the state two or three steps below that absolute sameness. He continued, "Another state comes on me when I cannot touch any one. If any one of these (pointing to the devotees) touch me, I have to cry out in pain." Who amongst us could then understand the mystery of it, that such an overwhelming amount of pure Sattva-guna was then there in the Master's mind that he could not bear the touch of the slightest impurity. He also added, "Such a state, again, sometimes comes on me during ecstasy that I can then touch him (Baburam) only. If he catches hold[1] of me then, I don't feel pain. If he feeds me I can eat."

22. The Master invited the woman devotee to come to Dakshineswar

Walking along with mind absorbed, the Master came to the verandah of the outer apartment, where the chariot was drawn, and happened suddenly to look behind to see that woman devotee following him that way. As soon as he saw her, he stood and saluted her again and again, saying, "Blissful Mother", "Blissful Mother". The devotee also placed her head on the Master's feet and saluted him in return. When she did so, the Master looked at her face and said, "Why not come, O mother, why not come with me?" He uttered the words in such a way and the devotee also felt such an attraction that without considering whether it was right or wrong, she (who was then about thirty years old and had never before gone from one place to another except in a palanquin), followed the Master to Dakshineswar. Before she started, she delayed just long enough to run to the inner apartment and say to Balaram Babu's wife, "I am going with the Master to Dakshineswar." Hearing that the aforesaid devotee was thus going to Dakshineswar, another woman devotee also gave up all work and started with her. Asking the woman devotee to follow him, the Master in that spiritual mood went straight to the boat with Sri Yogen, the junior Naren and other boy-devotees and sat down there. The two women devotees also

ran to the boat and sat down on the plank-flooring outside the covering of the boat. The boat started.

While going, the woman devotee said to the Master, “I feel a desire to call on Him much and to apply my whole mind to Him, but the mind by no means obeys the reins. What should I do?”

23. On the boat the Master replied to the woman devotee’s question: “Be like a cast off leaf before the wind”

The Master (affectionately): “Why not surrender yourself to Him? One should live in the world like a leaf before the wind—a leaf thrown out after food has been eaten out of it, cast-off to be blown by the wind whithersoever it likes. Do you know how it is? The cast-off leaf lies at a neglected corner; it flies as the wind carries it. It is just like that. One should depend on Him and live one’s life—the mind should move as the wind of divine consciousness moves it. That’s all.”

While this talk was going on, the boat reached the temple-ghat. As soon as the Master got down from the boat, he went to the house of Kali.[1] The women devotees went to the Holy Mother at the Nahavat[2] on the northern side of the temple compound. They saluted her and then started for the temple to pay their obeisance to Kali the Mother. In the meantime the Master came with his boy-devotees to the temple of Kali and offered salutations to Her. He then came, sat down in the music hall in ecstasy and began to sing in his sweet voice.

“O Mother, O enchantress of Siva, Thou hast deluded the world. Thou entertainest Thyself by playing on the Vina at the great lotus in the basic centre, near the sacral plexus.

O Thou Great Mantra, who movest in the three scales in the form of the three Gunas, striking the three cords, Sushumna etc., of the musical instrument, the body.

O Mother, Thou art of the form of the mode Bhairava in the basic centre, Sriraga in the six-petalled lotus at the Swadhishthana centre, Mallara in the Manipura, Vasanta (in the Anahata) illumining the heart.

Hindola in the Visuddha and Karnataka in the Ajna, O Thou, who art manifest as the thrice seven notes under the stress of pitch, tempo, rhythm and diatonic note.

Sri Nandakumar[1] says, 'The supreme Truth cannot be ascertained.' For, the empirical reality, the triple Gunas, have veiled the vision of the Jiva, blinded alternately by pains and pleasures."

24. The Master reached Dakshineswar and was in Bhavasamadhi. The devotees got evidence that his divine body should not be touched by one with a sore in one's body

The Master sat in the northern part of the music hall in front of the Mother and was thus singing the song. The devotees, some sitting, some standing, were charmed to listen to the song. In the course of singing, the Master went into ecstasy and stood up suddenly. The singing stopped. An extraordinary smile on his lips filled the place with bliss. The devotees were looking motionless on the holy person of the Master. When he saw that the Master's body, inclined a little, junior Naren was going to hold it straight, lest he should fall down. But no sooner had he touched him than the Master screamed out in terrible pain. Finding that his touch was not then liked by the Master, he stood aloof, when Ramlal, the Master's nephew, heard the scream from within the temple, came out quickly and caught hold of the Master's person. The Master remained in that state for some time and after listening to the names of God came back to normal consciousness. But he was not able to stand in the natural way, as if he was dead drunk. His legs were trembling very much.

In that condition he crawled down the steps on the northern side of the music hall to the courtyard of the temple and began to speak like a boy, "I shall not fall down, Mother; what do you say?" Seeing the Master then, one actually thought that he was a child of three or four years. Gazing at the Mother as he spoke those words and keeping his eyes fixed on Hers, he was confidently getting down the steps. Shall we see elsewhere such an attitude of wonderful reliance on God even in small matters?

25. The vision of the coiled Power and his talk in ecstasy

He crossed the courtyard, came to his room, went to the western verandah and sat down there. He was still in ecstasy. That mood would not leave him. Now it diminished a little, now increased. When it increased, he lost normal consciousness. Remaining in that condition for some time he began to say in that state of Bhava to the devotees who were with him, "Have you seen the snake? It gives me a lot of trouble." Again, as if forgetting the devotees immediately, he addressed the snake-like coiled Power (for it is needless to say that the Master saw Her just then in ecstasy) and said, "Go now. I will smoke and wash my mouth; my teeth have not been cleaned." Now speaking thus with the devotees, and now with the figure seen in ecstasy, the Master came back to the normal consciousness of ordinary people.

26. The Master was anxious to think what the devotees who came would have for their meal. He sent the women devotees for shopping

When the Master remained in the normal state of consciousness, he used to be anxious for the devotees; he sent some one to the Holy Mother to know whether there were any vegetables etc., in the house. She sent word in reply that there was nothing and the Master became again concerned, considering who would go to the market then. How could the men and women devotees who had come from Calcutta be fed if some vegetables etc., were not brought from the market? After some reflection he asked the two women devotees, "Can you go and make purchases in the market?" They said, "Yes" and went to the market and purchased and brought some greens, potatoes and two large brinjals. The Holy Mother cooked all these. From the temple also there came, as usual, a large plateful of Prasada. When the Master had finished taking his food, the devotees took Prasada. Afterwards, the reason why the Master had felt so much pain when junior Naren held him during his ecstasy was ascertained. It was found on inquiry that on his left temple he (junior Naren) had a small tumour which was gradually becoming bigger. Doctors applied medicine to produce a sore there, lest it should prove painful. It is true, we had heard before, that one should not touch the form of a deity, if one has a sore in one's body; but whoever thought that the saying would thus prove true before our very

eyes? He undoubtedly suffered pain, but it was beyond our power to understand the divine power within the Master, which impelled him suddenly to behave so even when he was absorbed in a spiritual mood and bereft of normal consciousness. It was known to us how high an opinion the Master expressed about junior Naren's purity of character. In his normal state of consciousness the Master touched Naren as he did all others, in spite of that sore in his body, allowed him to touch his feet and sat and stood with him. So, how could Naren know that, at the time of ecstasy, the Master would not be able to bear his touch because he had a sore in his body? He, therefore, did not touch the Master during ecstasy till the said sore was healed.

No one felt how the whole of the day slipped away in the company of the Master in the course of various religious conversations. Afterwards, at the approach of dusk, the men devotees started home. The two women devotees also took leave of the Master and the Holy Mother and walked back to Calcutta.

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27. The Master who had a boyish nature got afraid like a boy

Two or three days had elapsed since the events spoken of above had taken place. Pandit Sasadhar was to come to see the Master at the Dakshineswar Kali temple that afternoon. The Master, who had a boyish nature, got afraid on many occasions like a boy whenever he heard that any famous person would come to see him. He thought that he could not even read and write; moreover, there was no knowing when ecstasy would come upon him; and when he lost the consciousness of his body, his cloth, the only garment he had on, might drop off. Under such circumstances what would the new-comer think and say? What, we thought, did it matter to him what the new-comer might say or think? He had himself taught many people again and again, "People are nothing but worms; nothing spiritual will be attained as long as shame, hatred and fear abide." Did he then hunger for name and fame? But whenever we tried to test him, we found that the above-mentioned attitude of his was very like that of a boy, who

shrank through fear and shyness from seeing a stranger; but as soon as there grew up a little familiarity, he freely indulged in various kinds of jolly pranks with him, such as riding on his back and shoulder, pulling him by the hair and so on. The Master's attitude also was similar. He could not have talked with Maharaja Yatindramohan and the famous Krishnadas Pal in the way he did, had he had the slightest desire in his mind for name and fame.[1]

Again, the Master, it was sometimes seen, was afraid because he thought that the person who came to him might be harmed. For, it was true that it would not at all matter to the Master whether the new-comer could appreciate his conduct and manners or not; but if, unable to understand them, he slandered the Master, he was sure to meet with evil. Knowing this, he felt afraid. That was why, when Girish at one time spoke various harsh words about him in his presence with resentment and wounded feeling of love, the Master said, "Look here, let him speak of me whatever he likes; has he not abstained from speaking ill of my Mother?"

28. Pandit Sasadhar saw the Master for the second time

There was no limit whatever to the Master's fear when he heard that Sasadhar would come to see him. He said to Yogen, junior Naren and several others, "Please be present then (when the Pandit comes)." What the Master meant was this: he was an illiterate man; he might not be able to speak rightly with the Pandit. So we all should be present and speak with the Pandit and save the Master himself from lapses. Ah, how difficult it is to explain to others his childlike fear. But when Sasadhar actually arrived, the Master became, as it were, a different person. He was in a state resembling partial normal consciousness; while one looked at him with steadfast eyes his lips were seen slightly quivering with a smile. He then addressed the Pandit and said affectionately, "You are a Pandit; please say something."

Sasadhar: "Sir, my heart has dried up because of my study of philosophy. So, I have come to you in order to have a little of the sap of devotion. Therefore, please say something yourself and let me listen."

The Master (affectionately): "What shall I say? No one can say what Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute is. That is why He at first became

half-male and half-female. Why so? Because He wanted to show that both Purusha and Prakriti were He. He then came down another step from there and became the separate Purusha and the separate Prakriti."

As he spoke thus about the hidden truths of spirituality, he became excited and stood up and addressing Sasadhar, said:

"Until the mind is joined to the Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, both prayer to God and worldly duties continue. When, afterwards, the mind merges in Him, there is no necessity for attending to one's duties. Take, for example, the line of the song 'My Nitai is a mad elephant', sung in Kirtan. When the song commences, the words are sung with correct enunciation, tone, time, measure, tempo and rhythm. It is sung, as it should be, with attention to all these things. Afterwards, as the mind merges a little in the emotion produced by the song, the words, 'mad elephant', 'mad elephant' only are sung. As the mind enters more deeply into the emotion, 'elephant', 'elephant' only is sung. Again, when it goes deeper still, the singer, in trying to utter the word 'elephant' (Hati) can utter only the syllable 'Ha' (and remains with his mouth agape)."

Speaking thus, no sooner had the Master uttered the syllable 'Ha' than he became himself completely speechless and motionless and remained in that state for about fifteen minutes, bereft of consciousness, with his face bright and serene. At the end of the ecstasy, he addressed Sasadhar again and spoke affectionately.

The Master: "O Pandit, I have seen you through and through[1] *;* you are good. After finishing cooking etc., and feeding all, a housewife places her towel on her shoulder and goes to the pond to bathe and wash her clothes and does not return to the kitchen; so, you also will finish telling others of Him and will go, never to come back."

Hearing these words of the Master, Sasadhar said, "It is all through your grace" and took the dust of his feet again and again. He heard the Master's words quite astonished, and his heart melted into tears, as he had thought so long that he could not realize God.

29. The incident as described by the Master himself to a devotee

We shall now narrate the incident as described by the Master to a great friend of ours when the latter came to him on the day following Sasadhar's visit to Dakshineswar.

The Master (affectionately): "Don't you see that there is nothing of the kind (literary) here?—(I am) a man without education etc. I was much afraid when I heard that the Pandit would come here. You see, I have no consciousness of even my cloth! I shrank into myself for fear that I might say something which might not be proper. I said to Mother, 'I don't know the scriptures and) philosophies; I know Thyself only, Mother; please protect me Thyself.' Then I said to some one, 'Be present then'; again, to some other I said, 'I shall feel somewhat confident when I see you with me.' Even when the Pandit came and sat down, fear continued. I sat silent, went on looking at him and listening to his words. Just then I saw the Pandit's inner nature. Mother showed me that the study of the scriptures etc., was of no avail; if there were no detachment and discrimination, these things were of no use. Something crept immediately afterwards towards the head, and fear vanished in no time. I became completely overwhelmed; the face turned upwards and I felt a flow of words gushing out of my mouth. The more the words came out, the more were words pushed forward and supplied, as it were, by some one from within. It was as if a man was measuring paddy in that part of the country (Kamarpukur); one person counts the measures calling out one, two and so on, while another sits behind him and pushes forward the paddy and supplies him with heaps of it. But I did not know at all what I said. When a little consciousness returned, what I saw was that he (the Pandit) was weeping; he was completely changed. A state like this comes now and then; owing to fear, I was going again and again towards the Tamarisk trees (on account of urges for easing myself); it came also on the day when Kesav sent word that he would bring with him an Englishman (the missionary Cook on a tour to India) and take me in a steamer for a trip in the Ganga. When, however, they had come and I got into the steamer, I was in a state like this and there was a ceaseless flow of words. Afterwards they (showing us) said, 'You imparted much instruction.' But I knew nothing, my child."

30. Man gains faith in such stories extant about other incarnations, when he sees the extraordinary behaviour of the Master

How can we understand such wonderful states of the wonderful Master? We are simply astounded and speechless and know not what we should say. Dwelling in his body and mind, a marvellous Power sported in these unprecedented ways, brought any one whom It liked to Dakshineswar with a wonderful attraction and gave him strength to ascend to higher planes of spirituality. One cannot understand all this though one witnesses it. But one can know from the results that these wonderful events did really happen. Beyond that none can know anything. Ah, on how many occasions did we see with our own eyes malicious men coming to the Master with inimical intentions and the Master touching them in a state of ecstasy; when, overwhelmed with the influence of that power, they acquired a new life, with their internal nature radically changed, and were blessed! Jesus gave new life to that unhappy woman, Mary, by a mere touch. Sri Chaitanya in ecstasy climbed on to the shoulders of some person, whereupon his heretical feelings of doubt and disbelief were destroyed and he acquired devotion to God. We had read of such events in the lives of incarnations and used to think that the fanaticism of generations of disciples conspired with the mean desire of adding to the number of their followers to give currency to such misleading lies which had acted as a stumbling block on the path to the proper realization of truth in the spiritual world. It was, we found, admitted in the book called the *Bhakti-chaitanyachandrika,* published by the New Dispensation, that Sri Chaitanya used to lose normal consciousness at the name of Hari and we remember how we took the author to be soft-headed. Ah, how pitiably narrow we were at that time, and how pitiable would have been our condition had we not had the good fortune to see the Master! Having had the blessing of meeting the Master, we are now in a position, as they say, “to detect wrong thatching though we do not know how to thatch ourselves!” Now we are at least saved from accepting anything and everything as religion, be it from our own wretched doubting minds within or from charlatans without. Knowing now that devotion, faith, etc., can be directly imparted to one, like ordinary things, we have hope instilled into our hearts and we are confident of attaining immortality, being blessed with a drop of the grace of the Master who is an ocean of grace.

Footnote

1. This he spoke in English.

1. The Tamarisk trees in the north of Rani Rasmani's Kali temple. As that part of the garden was set apart for answering calls of nature etc., nobody went there for any other purpose.

2. Pratap Chandra Hazra.

3. The Master used to pronounce the word Narendra like that.

1. At the time of Sadhana the Master took no care of his body; consequently, his hair grew long and got matted on account of the accumulation of dust and dirt.

1. IV. 4.

1. Nava=nine; Yatra=trip.

1. As the Master had no body-consciousness during ecstasy, his limbs (the hands, head, neck, etc.) became bent and sometimes the whole body inclined on one side and was about to fall. The devotees who happened then to be beside him caught hold of those limbs and slowly set them in their proper positions and continued to hold him lest he should fall down. They uttered into his ears the names of those deities, whose contemplation had produced that state of the Master; for example, Kali, Kali; Rama Rama, Aum, Aum or Aum Tat Sat, and so on. This process being continued for some time, he would slowly regain normal consciousness. He felt great pain if any other name, except that by the contemplation of which he was inspired and absorbed, was uttered into his ears.

1. The Master called the Kali temple the house of Kali and the Radha-Govinda temple that of Vishnu.

2. The Holy Mother went to bed in the room on the ground floor of the Nahavat and kept sundry articles there. Cooking etc., were done in the verandah in front of that room. She went to the room upstairs sometimes in the day-time and, if the number of women devotees from Calcutta was large, provided them sleeping accommodation there.

1. The composer of the song.—Tr.

1. At the very outset he said to Maharaja Yatindramohan, “ But, my dear Sir, I cannot call you a Raja (king); how can I tell a lie?” Again, when, speaking of himself, the Maharaja compared himself with the great king Yudhishthira, the Master got much vexed and condemned that attitude of his.

When Krishnadas Pal argued with the Master that there was no other religion except doing good to the world, he pointed out the defect of his intellect with great annoyance.

1. i.e. ascending to a high plane of consciousness with the help of Samadhi, the Master saw what kind of past impressions there was in Sasadhar’s mind.

CHAPTER VI
SRI RAMAKRISHNA IN THE COMPANY OF DEVOTEES: THE STORY OF GOPALA'S MOTHER[1] —FIRST PART

> I worship Sri Krishna, the milk-woman's son in the form of the cowherd, black like a newly formed cloud, having eyes like blue lotuses and blue curly hair tied up (on the head) along with the glittering feathers of a peacock tail.
> I worship the bee drinking the honey of the lotus of the milkmaid's face.
>
> —Hymn to Gopala

> I make firm that faith of devotees with which they seek to worship any Form whatever (of Mine).
>
> —Gita VII. 21

> and whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.
>
> — Matthew XVIII. 6

WE cannot accurately say when Gopala's mother met the Master for the first time. But it is certain that when we saw her first with the Master at Dakshineswar in the month of March or April in 1885, she had been visiting the Master for about six months and the extraordinary sport of the divine Lord as Gopala, i.e., the cowherd boy of Vrindavan, had also been going on with her. On that occasion Gopala's mother, we remember distinctly, sat facing southeast (that is facing the Master) near the large jar containing the water of the Ganga in the northwest corner of the Master's room. Though she was about sixty years old, one could not guess it; for in the face of the old lady there shone the joy and happiness of a girl. When we were

introduced to her, she said, “Are you G—’s son? You are ours indeed! G —’s son has become a devotee! This time Gopala will not make a single exception; he will attract all, one by one. That’s very good. I had previously been related to you in a worldly sense; now I am related in another, closer manner.” And so on.

1. Gopala’s mother saw the Master for the first time

It was the month of December of 1884. The sky was as clear as possible. Again, there was, we remember, a little touch of cold, quite crisp, from the beginning of the month of November that year. It was perhaps in that season of Hemanta[1], neither very hot nor very cold, that Gopala’s mother had the blessing of meeting the Master for the first time. They came by boat to see the Master from the temple garden on the bank of the Ganga at Kamarhati, belonging to Govinda Chandra Datta of Pataldanga. We say “they” because Gopala’s mother did not come alone on that occasion; the widow of the said owner of the garden and a distant relation of hers, named Kamini, came with Gopala’s mother. The name of Sri Ramakrishna was then known to many in Calcutta. So, they also were eager to see that extraordinary devotee ever since they had heard of him. The special service of the holy image had to be performed in the month of Kartik (November). Therefore, Govinda Babu’s wife, the mistress of the house, as she was called, lived at Kamarhati this time every year and looked after the said service personally. Again, Dakshineswar was only two or three miles from Kamarhati; so, it was very convenient to come from there to Dakshineswar. The mistress of Kamarhati and Gopala’s mother took that opportunity and came to the Kali temple of Rani Rasmani at Dakshineswar.

That day the Master respectfully made them sit in his own room and gave them such instruction about devotion, sang devotional songs for them and bade bood-bye to them, asking them to come again. While they were taking leave, the mistress invited the Master to grace her temple at Kamarhati. The Master also agreed to go some day at his convenience. He highly praised the mistress and Gopala’s mother that day. He said, “Ah, how beautiful is the expression of their faces and eyes! They are, as it were, floating on the current of the love of God; their eyes are full of the intense love of God.

Even the Tilaka on the nose is beautiful." That is to say, the feeling of devotion within was, as it were, bubbling out through their dress, deportment, etc., and there was no attempt at display.

2. Govinda Chandra Datta of Pataldanga

Govinda Chandra Datta of Pataldanga was a broker to a famous European house in Calcutta. He became very rich on account of his efficiency and perseverance. But owing to an attack of paralysis, he became unfit for service. Prior to this, his only son had died and he followed the son. Among those who survived him were his two daughters Bhuta and Naran[1] and their children. But as he had considerable property the latter part of his life had been spent in religious discussions and virtuous activities. Virtuous acts such as arrangements for discourses on the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* in his house, installation of the holy images of Radha and Krishna with great pomp in the Kamarhati garden, recital of the whole of the *Bhagavata* and other Sastras, a ceremonial gift of valuables of the weight of himself and his wife to the Brahmins, the poor and others, had all been performed by him before he passed away. Besides, there was no lack of festivals, or, as they would call it, no cessation of "thirteen festivals in twelve months", in connection with the worship of Radha-Krishna in the Kamarhati garden and Prasada was distributed unstintedly to guests and others, the poor and the indigent.

3. His wife, a devotee

After the death of Govinda Babu, his virtuous wife also conducted for a long time the service of the holy images with the same sort of pomp. Afterwards, the greater part of the property was lost for various reasons. Therefore, in order that there might not be any falling off in the service of the holy images, Govinda Babu's wife herself lived there and engaged herself in looking after it. The mistress belonged to the old school of thought and life and underwent much grief and suffering in her life. So her very bones, as it were, felt that there was peace in the practice of religion only. But the cursed worldly entanglement was not to be easily shaken off.

She had to take care of her daughters, sons-in-law, society, position, honour etc. But she observed with the strictest rigidity the vow of Brahmacharya from the day her husband died. She used to sleep on the floor, bathe at the three junctures of the day, take food once only in twenty-four hours, and she spent her time in practising the vows of gifts, fasts, Japa, meditation, and other religious observances, and above all in the service of the holy images.

4. The family of her priest. Aghoramani, a child-widow

The family of Govinda Babu's priests lived very near the Kamarhati temple. Nilamadhav Bandyopadhyaya, the priest, was a respectable person. Gopala's mother, previously named Aghoramani Devi, was his sister. As she had become a widow in her childhood, she had been a member of her father's family all her life. Aghoramani began to spend her time in the service of the images in the temple ever since she became very intimate with Govinda Babu's wife, the mistress, as she was called. As her love for God increased, she had a strong desire to live in the temple itself on the Ganga. So, she took the permission of the mistress and began to live in one of the rooms in the women's apartment. She visited her father's family once or twice a day; that was all.

Aghoramani loved to practise strict penance and Brahmacharya like the mistress. There was, therefore, much similarity of thoughts and feelings between them. The mistress, a rich lady possessing much property, had outwardly to take notice of her honour, social position, etc. But as Aghoramani had none of them, she was comparatively free. Again, as there was not a single child born to her, there was nothing to bother her. What she possessed was perhaps a sum of six or seven hundred rupees, the sale proceeds of her ornaments etc. That also was deposited with the mistress in government security papers. Aghoramani used to live on the interest of this money and when in great want, she drew from the capital a little. Of course, the mistress also helped her and her brother in all matters.

5. Aghoramani's devotion to the established rites and practices

Being a child-widow, Aghoramani never knew the happiness of the company of a husband. Women say, “The child-widows are extremely meticulous (about the observances of established rites and ceremonies), so much so, that they wash even salt before using it!” Aghoramani too was such a one when she grew up. One day, we know, she cooked rice and was serving it from the cooking pot on the plate of Sri Ramakrishna, when somehow or other the tiny stick with which rice is stirred in the pot, was touched by him. Aghoramani did not eat the remaining rice in the pot and threw even the stick into the Ganga. This happened when she had just begun visiting the Master.

There were two or three hearths in the music room (Nahavat) at Dakshineswar. It was late on many occasions before the offering of cooked rice and other services to Kali the Mother were completed; sometimes it would be half past one. When the Master was unwell—and he had alimentary troubles etc., almost daily—the supremely revered Holy Mother cooked for him a little rice and soup at an early hour. Dal and Chapati were also prepared over these hearths for those devotees who spent their nights now and then with the Master. The Holy Mother cooked food over those hearths for those ladies also who came from Calcutta and other places to see the Master and spent with her in that Nahavat the whole day and sometimes the night also. On the day when Aghoramani or “the Brahmani of Kamarhati”, as the Master called her in the beginning, came to visit him, the Holy Mother had to purify the hearth thrice with cow-dung, Ganga water, etc., before the Brahmani would condescend to put her cooking pot over it. So great was her observance of purity and cleanliness!

6. She lived in Govinda Babu’s temple and practised penances

The Brahmani of Kamarhati, again, was very sensitive from her childhood. She could not at all put up with any uncharitable remark by anybody, let alone her supplicating anybody for pecuniary help. Besides, as soon as she saw anybody doing anything wrong, she felt no hesitation in telling him of it to his very face. So, she could not get on well with any one. The room, given her by the mistress to live in, was situated in the extreme south of the garden. One could have a good view of the Ganga through the

three southern windows of the room which had two doors in the north and the west. The Brahmani sat in that room, observed the Ganga flow by, and performed Japa night and day. She thus spent thirty years in that room in weal and woe before she met Sri Ramakrishna for the first time.

The Brahmani's father's family were perhaps Sakta (i.e., worshippers of God as the Mother of the universe). We do not know what the faith of her father-in-law's family was. But she was herself a follower of Vishnu and was initiated by her Guru in the Mantra of Gopala, God in the form of the child Krishna. Her close relation with the mistress also perhaps was responsible for it; for, the Guru family of Govinda Babu were the Goswamis of Malpara who were worshippers of Krishna, and one or two of them very often lived at Kamarhati since the temple had been built there. But it is difficult to decide how Aghoramani had such unswerving motherly love for God and how she had the desire of worshipping Him as her son in the form of Gopala, though she, being a child-widow, had no experience whatever in this life of how a mother felt for her child. Many will say, "It was due to her previous birth and past impressions." Anyway her devotion was a fact.

7. Different expressions and manifestations of spirituality in the women of the East and the west

Whenever there arises an urge for religion in the women of England or America as a result of suffering in the world or for some other reason, it gets manifested through gifts, doing good to others or the service of the poor, and the suffering humanity. It becomes their only aim to do good to people day and night. The reverse is the case in our country. Here this piety gets manifested through the observance of strict continence, the practice of austerities, the observance of established rites and ceremonies, the counting of beads, etc., which, at last becoming the end and aim of their lives, lead them on to ever greater inwardness and renunciation of the world. The idea that the realization of God is the end and aim of human life and that therein lies real abiding peace has surcharged the atmosphere of India and has entered the very marrow of men and women here. Therefore, the life in solitude together with the practice of austerities on the part of the Brahmani

of Kamarhati, though a matter of surprise for the people of other countries, is nothing unusual in this country.

* * * *

The Brahmani of Kamarhati felt great attraction for Sri Ramakrishna, since the day she had first met him. But why it was so and how far-reaching it was to be, she had no idea. She felt an indescribable attraction for him but her conception of him did not go beyond what she said then, “He is a very good man, a real monk and devotee. I will come to him again as soon as I get time.” The mistress also felt similarly, but perhaps she never came again, lest society should speak ill of her. Besides, she had to spend much time at her Pataldanga house on account of her daughters and sons-in-law. Dakshineswar was far from there and if she were to come, she had to inform all and make necessary arrangements. So there was not much possibility of her coming to Dakshineswar again.

8. Aghoramani met the Master a second time

The Brahmani had no such difficulty. Therefore, a few days after her first visit, as soon as a desire to come to the Master arose in her while she was performing Japa, she suddenly came to Dakshineswar with two or three pice worth of Sandesh of inferior quality. No sooner had the Master seen her than he cried out saying, “Oh, you have come! Give me what you have brought for me.” Gopala’s mother says, “I shrank within myself at having to bring out that bad Sandesh, seeing that so many people brought so many good things and fed him. Besides, imagine, scarcely had I arrived when he wanted to eat that worthless stuff!” As she could not say anything out of fear and shame, she brought out that Sandesh and gave it to him. The Master also ate it with great pleasure and said while eating it, “Why do you spend money and bring Sandesh? Prepare and keep cocoanut balls and bring one or two when you come. Or bring whatever you cook with your own hand, be it Chachchari of the creepers and leaves of bottle-gourd or the curry prepared with legume of drum-sticks mixed with potato, brinjals and balls of the paste of pulses. I feel a great desire to eat things cooked by

you.” Gopala’s mother says, “There was no talk of religion and pious topics, but only of eating. I thought, ‘I have come to see a strange Sadhu who talks of eating and eating only; I am a poor indigent person, how can I feed him so much? Leave him alone. I won’t come again.’ But as soon as I crossed the door frame of the gate of the Dakshineswar garden, he was, as it were, pulling me from behind. I could proceed no farther. I consoled my mind in various ways and dragged it back, so to say, to Kamarhati. Just a few days after, the Brahmani walked three miles with Chachchari in her hand to see Paramahamsa Deva. As soon as she came, the Master asked for it as before, ate it and expressed joy saying, “Ah, how beautifully cooked! It is, as it were, nectar, the very nectar.” Gopala’s mother’s eyes were filled with tears to see that joy of the Master. She thought that as she was a poor, indigent woman, the Master was praising that ordinary stuff of hers.

In this way her visits to Dakshineswar became more and more frequent for two or three months. Thenceforward, she used to bring whatever of the dishes cooked by her was found tasty, all the way from Kamarhati to Dakshineswar. The Master also ate it with relish. Again he asked her to bring some ordinary thing, such as a preparation of Sushni herb or Chachchari of bindweed and so on. Troubled with the request, “Bring this, bring that” and the frequent repetition of “I want to eat this, I want to eat that”, Gopala’s mother would think now and then, “Gopala, is this the result of my meditation on you? You have brought me to a Sadhu who wants only to eat. I’ll never come any more.” But there, that irresistible attraction again! “When and how soon shall I go again!”

9. The Master came to Govinda Babu’s garden

In the meantime Sri Ramakrishna came once to Govinda Babu’s garden at Kamarhati and expressed great joy to see the service etc., of the holy images there. On that occasion he sang songs before the images there. He then took food and returned to Dakshineswar. Seeing his wonderful ecstasy at the time of singing, the mistress and others were greatly charmed. But it is very difficult to say whether the venerable Goswamis did not feel a little jealousy and hatred lest they should lose their influence. We are told that this was what actually happened.

* * * *

It was a long-standing practice with the Brahmani of Kamarhati, to rise at two in the morning, finish her ablutions and sit down for Japa at three. She finished performing Japa by eight or nine, when she bathed, paid a visit to the holy images and joined in the service of the temple according to her capacity. Afterwards, when the food offering to the holy images was over, she engaged herself in cooking her own food at twelve noon. As soon as she had taken a little rest after her meal, she sat for Japa again. She witnessed the evening Arati, spent much of the night in Japa, and took a little milk before going to bed for a few hours. The humour of wind was prevalent in her constitution by nature; so, she had only a little sleep. Sometimes she had palpitation of heart and an indescribable uneasy sensation. When the Master was told of it, he said, "That humour of wind of yours is due to your meditation on Hari; if that be cured what will be the support of your life? Please eat something whenever you feel like that."

10. The state of Aghoramani when she had the vision of the divine form of Gopala

It was 1884. The winter was over and the pleasant spring, abounding in flowers, arrived. Full of leaves, flowers and songs, the earth was experiencing an awakening; a sort of madness and hilarity was there in the air. In that joy and inebriation of nature there was no difference of good and bad, which was observable in the propensities of Jivas, according to their impressions. Expressions of nature are the same though in common parlance we say, the virtuous are awake to the good suggestions of nature and the vicious, to the vile. That is the difference.

During this time of the year, one morning at three, the Brahmani of Kamarhati sat for Japa. Japa finished, she began to perform Pranayama before offering the result of the Japa to her chosen Ideal, when she saw that Sri Ramakrishna was sitting near her to the left and the palm of his right hand looked half clenched. She saw him now as live and distinct as she usually saw him at Dakshineswar. She thought, "What is this? How and whence has he come here at such an hour?" Gopala's mother says, "I was

looking at him with astonishment and thinking thus while Gopala (as she called Sri Ramakrishna) sat and smiled. Then, with a beating heart, as soon as I caught hold of Gopala's (Sri Ramakrishna's) left hand with mine, that figure vanished into the void and a ten-month-old real Gopala, as though of flesh and blood as big as that (indicating the size with her hands) came out of that figure. And Oh, the beauty of it! Crawling, with one of his hands raised, he looked at my face and said to me, 'Mother, give me butter.' I was overwhelmed with that experience. That was a strange affair. I cried out loudly, and that was not an ordinary cry. There were no people in the house; they would have otherwise assembled there. I wept and said, 'My child, I am a miserable, indigent woman. What should I feed you with? Where shall I get butter and milk, my child?' But did that strange Gopala give ear to that? He only went on saying, 'Give me something to eat.' What could I do? I got up weeping, took down a dry ball of cocoanut from a hanging rope-loop and, placing it on his hand, said, 'Gopala, my child, though I give you this worthless thing to eat, don't you give me such food to eat.'

11. In that state she came to the Master at Dakshineswar

"Then as regards Japa? How could I perform that? Gopala came, sat on my lap and snatched away the rosary. He rode on my shoulder and crawled all round the room. As soon as it was dawn I started for Dakshineswar, running like one mad; Gopala climbed on my lap and rested his head on my shoulder. I caught hold of him on my breast with one hand on his buttocks and the other on his back and covered the whole journey. The two purple feet of Gopala, I saw clearly, were dangling on my breast."

Inebriated with an intense love of God on account of the attainment of the vision of her own chosen Ideal, Aghoramani came walking from the Kamarhati garden to the Master at Dakshineswar early in the morning, when another woman devotee known to us was also present there. We shall now tell the reader what we heard from her. She said:

"I was then sweeping and cleaning the Master's room. It was morning, about 7 or 7-30, when I heard some one outside crying, 'Gopala, Gopala', and coming towards the Master's room. The voice was a known one and it began gradually to come nearer. I looked and found it was Gopala's mother.

She was not properly dressed, and looked like one mad with the two eyes gone up to the forehead, as it were, sweeping the ground with the skirt of the cloth she was wearing—as if she took notice of nothing. She entered the Master's room in that state through the eastern door. The Master was then sitting on his small bedstead within the room.

"Seeing Gopala's mother in that condition I was completely surprised; the Master entered into ecstasy on seeing her. Gopala's mother in the meantime came and sat down near him, and like a boy, the Master went and sat on her lap. Both her eyes were then shedding tears copiously; and she fed the Master with her own hand with the cream, butter and thickened milk she had brought with her. I was flabbergasted to see it; for, I never before saw the Master in Bhava touch any woman, though I heard that the Brahmani, the Master's Guru, assumed sometimes the attitude of Yasoda and the Master in the attitude of Gopala sat on her lap. I was, however, completely astounded to see that state of Gopala's mother and the Master's mood. A little later, that mood of the Master came to an end and he got up and sat on his bedstead. But that mental attitude of Gopala's mother would not come to an end. Beside herself with joy, she stood up and walked dancing round the whole room, saying like one mad, 'Brahma dances, Vishnu dances' and so on. The Master saw it, smiled and said to me, 'Just see, she is completely filled with Bliss; her mind has now gone to the sphere of Gopala.' Gopala's mother had indeed such visions while in Bhava and she became a different person, as it were. On another occasion, at the time of taking her meal, overwhelmed with spiritual emotions, and thinking that we were so many Gopalas, she fed us with rice with her own hand. As I had not married my daughter to a person of a family equal in rank with ours, she hated me a little in her mind. Ah, how much humility she expressed for that on that occasion! She said, 'Did I know before that you have so much faith and devotion in you? Gopala can touch almost none at the time of Bhava and today he sat while in Bhava on your back! Are you an ordinary person'?" The Master in fact was suddenly in Bhava to see Gopala's mother that day and at first sat on the back of that lady and afterwards on the lap of Gopala's mother for sometime.

She arrived at Dakshineswar that day in that state and said many things to Sri Ramakrishna, shedding profuse tears in the exuberance of Bhava. She

said, “There is Gopala here on my lap, there it enters into your body (Sri Ramakrishna’s) ... there it comes out again. Come, my child, come to the lap of your miserable mother”, and so on. She saw the restless Gopala sometimes vanishing into the person of the Master and sometimes again coming to her in the bright form of a boy. There was no end to his childish play and pranks. She was drowned in that surge of emotion; she forgot all her austere rules and regulations; all her regard for the established, rites and ceremonies was washed away. Who can control oneself when submerged in the tidal waves of Bhava?

12. The Master praised that state, describing it as hard to attain. He pacified her

From that day Aghoramani became “Gopala’s Mother” in the real sense of the term, and the Master began to call her by that name. Sri Ramakrishna expressed great joy to see that extraordinary state of Gopala’s mother. He passed his hand over her heart in order to pacify her. He fed her with whatever good things were available there. Even while eating, the Brahmani, under the influence of Bhava, said, “Gopala, my child, your miserable mother has spent her time in this life in great misery; she earned a miserable living by selling sacred thread spun by her with the help of a spindle. Is this why you are taking so much care of her today?” and so on.

The Master made her stay for the whole day with him. She took her bath and food there. He pacified her a little and sent her to Kamarhati a little before sunset. Gopala, seen in Bhava, was on her lap and accompanied her as before on her way back to Kamarhati. When she returned home, Gopala’s mother sat for Japa according to her previous habit. But could she perform it? For, He, the very object for whose sake she prayed, counted beads, and passed days and nights in meditation, was before her, playing, frolicking, importuning. At last the Brahmani got up and lay on her bedstead with Gopala beside her. The Brahmani had for her bed whatever she could get; she had not got even a pillow to rest her head on. But she had no peace even though she lay, for Gopala was grumbling. Having no other course left open, the Brahmani placed Gopala’s head on her left arm and making him lie near her bosom, consoled him thus, “My child, sleep this way tonight; as

soon as it is morning, I'll go to Calcutta and ask Bhuta (the eldest daughter of the mistress) to make for you a soft pillow with cotton cleared of seeds", and so on.

We have already said that Gopala's mother cooked her food with her own hand and feeding Gopala mentally, used to take Prasada herself. The following day she went to the garden to collect dry wood to cook early and feed Gopala's person. She saw Gopala also coming with her, collecting wood and piling it in the kitchen. Thus did mother and son collect wood and then the cooking began. At the time of cooking also, the naughty Gopala began to see everything, sometimes sitting beside her and sometimes riding on her back. It said many things and importuned her for many things. The Brahmani now pacified it with sweet words, now scolded it.

Gopala's mother came to Dakshineswar once, a few days after the aforesaid event had happened. She saw the Master and went to the Nahavat, where the Holy Mother lived, and sat for Japa. Finishing the usual number of Japa and making salutation, she was going to get up when she found that the Master had come there from the Panchavati. When the Master saw Gopala's mother, he said, "Why do you perform so much Japa now? You have achieved much (of visions etc.) indeed."

Gopala's mother: "Shall I not perform Japa? Have I attained everything?"

13. The Master said to Gopala's mother: "You have attained everything"

The Master: "Yes, you have attained everything."

Gopala's mother: "Everything?"

The Master: "Yes, everything."

Gopala's mother: "What do you say? Have I attained everything?"

The Master: "Yes, everything. Performance of Japa, practising penance, etc., for yourself have been finished. But you may do these things, if you like, for this body (showing himself), so that it may keep well."

Gopala's mother: "Then whatever I'll do from now on, is yours, yours, yours."

Mentioning this event, Gopala's mother said to us now and then, "Hearing these words of Gopala that day, I threw into the Ganga everything,

the rosary, the rosary-bag, etc. I then performed Japa on the fingers for the good of Gopala. Long afterwards, I began to use a rosary. I thought, 'Must I not do something? What shall I be doing all the twenty-four hours?' I, therefore, count the beads for Gopala's good."

From now on, Gopala's mother's Japa, penance, etc., came to an end. Visits to Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar became more frequent. The established practices and religious rites also which she had observed so long in respect of her food etc., were washed away gradually by that wave of Bhava. Gopala occupied her mind and heart completely and there was no limit to the ways how he taught her. And how could she preserve intact that unswerving routine of hers? For, Gopala wanted to eat at any time, and he thrust into his mother's mouth whatever he ate. Could that be rejected? Moreover, he wept if that were rejected. Since she was incessantly floating on that extraordinary wave of Bhava, the Brahmani knew that it was the play of none else but Sri Ramakrishna, and that it was none but he, who was her "Sri Krishna in the form of Gopala, black like a newly-formed cloud and having eyes like the petals of a blue lotus". She, therefore, cooked for him, fed him and had no hesitation in eating his Prasada.

Thus did the Brahmani of Kamarhati live continuously for two months with Sri Krishna in the form of Gopala, whom she placed now on her breast, now on her back. It indeed falls to the lot of rare, fortunate ones to enjoy such an unbroken surge of Bhava for such a long period, and the realization and vision of pure Consciousness condensed and vivified into the divine name (Nama), divine abode (Dhama) and the divine Lord (Shyama). Motherly love for God is in itself rare in the world—the birth of such love is impossible so long as there is the slightest consciousness of the powers of God in one's mind—how much more rare, it may be easily inferred, is the vision of the divine Lord through that love condensed, as it were, with the help of unprecedented devotion. There is the saying, "Mother Kali is awake in Kaliyuga, Gopala is awake in Kaliyuga." This is perhaps why the vivid and glowing realization of these two forms of the divine Lord are sometimes met with even now.

Sri Ramakrishna said to Gopala's mother, "You have achieved much. The body cannot continue in the Kaliyuga if such a state persists for a long time." It was, it seems, the Master's wish that the body, purified by Bhava,

of this poor Brahmani, a bright example of motherly love for God, might live for some time more in this world for the good of humanity. After the lapse of the two months mentioned above, the vision etc., experienced by Gopala's mother became a great deal rarer than before. But she was having that vision as before whenever she sat quiet a little and meditated on Gopala.

Footnote

1. We are here going to present the reader the wonderful story of the spiritual visions and experiences of Gopala's mother, a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, by way of an example of how the Master, established in the divine mood, was seen by us to enact his divine play with particular Sadhakas and devotees. Some may scent exaggerations in this story; to them we say, we have not added any touches whatever to it, not even to its language. We have placed it before the reader almost in the form in which we collected it, part of it from women devotees of the Master. Again, we have collected them from persons who in everything they say keep a keen eye on truth and feel repentant if they lapse from it. And they are persons who, far from being flatterers of the "Brahmani of Kamarhati", have sometimes strongly criticized to us some of her actions.

1. Two months in between autumn and winter.—Tr.

1. Yajneswari and Narayani.

CHAPTER VII
SRI RAMAKRISHNA IN THE COMPANY OF DEVOTEES. THE RETURN CHARIOT JOURNEY IN A.D. 1885 AND THE STORY OF GOPALA'S MOTHER—LAST PART

> To those of undivided minds who worship Me and always remain united with Me, I bring and preserve all the things they require.
>
> —Gita IX. 22

1. The festival of the return Chariot-journey at Balaram Basu's house

The Master came to Balaram Babu's house at Baghbazar in Calcutta on the occasion of the Chariot festival some time after the Brahmani of Kamarhati had had the vision of the divine Lord in the form of Gopala. There was a crowd of devotees and, beside himself with joy, Balaram Babu was receiving and welcoming all duly. He was a devotee belonging, to an ancient family of devotees, who had been devoted to God generation after generation, and not for one generation only. The Master's grace bestowed on his and his family was also unbounded.

2. The Master's desire to see the Sankirtan of Sri Chaitanya. His vision of the same. He saw Balaram Babu in that party

At one time, we were told by the Master himself, when he had a desire to see Sri Chaitanya's Sankirtan through the streets of the town, he had a vision of it. It was a wonderful affair. It was a boundless crowd and there were unrestrained love-inebriation and the maddening attraction of Sri

Gauranga intoxicated with love of God, in the centre of that tidal wave of maddening love. That limitless concourse of people began to proceed from the side of the Panchavati slowly forward in front of the Master's room. The Master, said that in that procession Balaram Babu's face, serenely bright with the light of devotion, was one of the few faces which he saw and which were imprinted for ever in his memory. On the day on which Balaram Babu came to the Dakshi-neswar Kali temple to see the Master, as soon as the latter saw him he recognized him to be that person seen in that procession.

3. Balaram's service of God in many places. The food belonging to Balaram was pure

Balaram Babu had an estate at Kothar, Orissa; the service of God was carried on in the image of Shyamchand (Krishna) there. He had a bower in Vrindavan, where the worship of Syamasundara (the beautiful Krishna) was conducted. There was also the image of Jagannath[1] in his Calcutta house and; service was performed there. "The food", said Sri Ramakrishna, "given by Balaram is pure. They have been serving God, guests and Sadhus for generation after generation. His father has renounced everything and is living in the holy Vrindavan repeating the name of Hari. I can take with pleasure the food given by Balaram; as soon as it is put into the mouth it goes down automatically as it were." Indeed, of the food of all the devotees, it was Balaram's that, we have noticed, he took with the greatest pleasure. The Master had his midday meal invariably at Balaram's house whenever he came to Calcutta in the morning. It is doubtful whether he ever took food in anyone else's house except those of Brahmin devotees. But it was a different matter if it was the Prasada of Narayana or of any other image of God.

4. The Master's four suppliers of necessities. Balaram's privilege as regards the Master's service

There exists an indescribable, uncommon element in even the ordinary activities, daily or occasional, of great souls, who are indeed few and far

between. Any one, who was in the company of Sri Ramakrishna, even for a day, would specially comprehend the truth of this statement. If only we analyse the simple matter of the Master's taking food given by Balaram, it will be quite clear. At one time during his Sadhana, the Master prayed and said to the Mother, "Mother, don't make me a dry and austere monk; keep me above want." The divine Mother also showed him that four suppliers of provisions for him had been sent to the world. The Master used to say that, of those four, Mathur, the son-in-law of Rani Rasmani, was the first and Sambhu Mallick, the second. Surendranath Mitra, whom the Master called Surendar and sometimes Suresh, was, he said, a "half supplier". We had not the good fortune to see with our eyes the service of Mathuranath and Sambhu Babu, for we came to the Master long after they had passed away. But we have heard from the Master himself that it was a wonderful affair. We do not remember the Master to have ever mentioned Balaram to be one of the suppliers of his provisions. But the privilege of his service, which we witnessed, appeared to us to be very extraordinary. It was not inferior in any respect to that of the other suppliers, except that of Mathur Babu. We shall try to describe these things some other time. Let us now say only this, namely, that Balaram Babu supplied all the food necessary for the Master—rice, candy, farina, sago, barley, vermicelli, tapioca, etc.,—from the day he first went to Dakshineswar to the day when the Master passed beyond our gross vision. And Surendra or Suresh Mitra, as he was called, shortly after he had met the Master, used to make arrangements for the food and bedding for those devotees who spent nights with the Master at Dakshineswar to serve him.

Who can say what hidden relation these persons had with the Master? And who can explain why they had that high privilege vouchsafed to them? We have understood this much that they were rare, fortunate persons, especially marked by the Mother of the universe. They would not otherwise have been born with the privilege of being helpers to the present Lila of Sri Ramakrishna. Otherwise their faces would not have been so deeply imprinted in such a way in the ever-free, pure and awakened mind of Sri Ramakrishna as to enable him to recognize them as soon as he saw them. He said, "They belong to here (i.e., to him); they are born with this special privilege."

5. The Master always said “here” and “of this place” instead of I and mine. Its reason[1]

The Master used to say, “They belong to here” instead of “They are mine”. For, not the slightest I-consciousness could find a place in Sri Ramakrishna’s pure mind. It was, therefore, very difficult for him to use the words ‘I’ and ‘Mine’. Or, why say difficult? He could not at all use these two words. When it became absolutely necessary to utter them, he would say them in the sense of “I am the servant or the child of the Mother”. And this also could only be said if the mind had this attitude beforehand in full. That is why, when in any case it was necessary to say “mine” in the course of conversation, the Master almost always pointed to his body and said “of this place”. The devotees also could understand from it what he meant. For example, when he said “such and such a person is not of this place”, “it is not the attitude or idea of this place” and so on, we knew that he meant to say, “he or she was not his”, “it was not his attitude or idea.”

6. How and how long the suppliers served the Master

Now we shall say something about the suppliers of the Master’s provisions. The Master’s first supplier, Mathuranath, was engaged in serving the Master for fourteen years from the time of his first auspicious advent to the Kali temple to some time after his Sadhana was at an end. The second one, Sambhu Babu, lived and served the Master from some time after Mathur Babu passed away to some time before Kesav and other devotees of Calcutta went to him. The “half supplier”, Suresh Babu, lived, served and took care of him and his Sannyasin devotees from six or seven years before the Master passed away to four or five years after that event. The Baranagar monastery (which was later converted into the Belur Math) was founded in 1886 in the old, dilapidated house of the Munsi Babus at Baranagar, at the eager request of this Suresh Babu and with his money. There are one and a half suppliers yet to be accounted for; where are they? The American lady Mrs. Sara. C. Bull, who helped Swami Vivekananda so much in establishing the Belur Math and Balaram Babu of whom we are

speaking,—are they these one and a half? Who will now decide the question in the absence (in gross forms) of Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda?

* * * *

7. “All the members of Balaram’s family are strung to the same tune”

Ever since Balaram Babu went to Dakshineswar, he used to invite Sri Ramakrishna to his house at the time of the Car festival every year. His house or rather his brother Rai Harivallabha Basu Bahadur’s (who was a famous advocate of Cuttack, Orissa) was situated on Ramkanta Basu’s street at Baghbazar. Balaram Basu used to live in his brother’s house. The number of the house was 57. It cannot be ascertained how many times the house, 57 Ramkanta Basu’s street, was sanctified by the presence of the Master. Who will ascertain how many people have been blessed with the privilege of seeing him there? The Master sometimes jokingly called the Dakshineswar temple, the fort of Kali the Mother. It will not be an exaggeration to call this house Her second fort. “All the members of Balaram’s family”, said the Master, “are strung to the same tune.” Every one of the house, from the master and the mistress to the little children, was the Master’s devotee. They did not take anything, even water, before performing the Japa of the name of the divine Lord. They had equal regard for the pious acts of worship, holy reading, service of monks, gifts for good causes, etc. It is seen in many families that while one or two of the members are religious, the others are of a different nature —foreign elements, so to say. But in this family it was different; all were of the same nature. Rare, perhaps, are the families in the world who are selflessly religious; rarer still are those in which all the members have love for the same ideal and help one another in realizing it. That this family was, therefore, the Master’s second fort and that he enjoyed being there, were not matters for surprise.

8. The Car Festival in Balaram’s house was an expression of love of God without pomp and grandeur

We have already said that there was the service of Jagannath in this house; so a chariot used to be drawn at the time of the Chariot Festival. But everything was an expression of the love of God and there was nothing of external pomp and grandeur; noise, decoration of the house, music, the din and bustle of the rabble—there was nothing of all these. A small chariot used to be drawn in the quadrangular verandah in the first floor of the outer apartment facing all the four quarters and overlooking a square court below. A party of Kirtan-singers came. They sang Kirtan as the chariot was drawn. And the Master and his devotees joined in the singing. But in what other place will one have that bliss, that profusion of the love of God, that God-intoxicated mood, and that sweet dance of the Master! Pleased with the pure devotion of the Sattvika family, Jagannath, the Lord of the universe, manifested Himself in the image on the chariot and in the body of Sri Ramakrishna. In what other place would one meet with that wonderful sight! Carried away by the current of pure devotion, even the hearts of godless men melted into tears, not to speak of those of devotees. After a few hours of such Kirtan, cooked food was offered to Jagannath and after the Master had had his meal, all others took Prasada. Afterwards, late in the night, that fair of bliss came to an end and all, except a few, went home. The writer had the taste of this bliss only once in his life. It was on that occasion that at the Master's request, Gopala's mother was invited. We are speaking of the festival of the return Chariot-journey of the year 1885. The Master came to Balaram Babu's house on that day, spent there two days and two nights and returned by boat to Dakshineswar on the third day at eight or nine in the morning.

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The Master came in the morning to that house. He sat for some time in the outer apartment and then he was taken to the inner one for a little refreshment. Many men devotees assembled in the outer apartment, coming in twos and threes, and in the inner apartment also came all the women devotees of the Master from the neighbouring houses. Many of the latter were Balaram Babu's relatives or acquaintances. He used to send for them and have them brought to his house whenever the Master came there. And

also whenever he used to go to Dakshineswar to pay a visit to Sri Ramakrishna, he had them brought to his house and took them there with him. Many women devotees—the lady Bhavini, Asim's mother, Ganu's mother and grandmother, or again this man's mother, that person's aunt, a third's husband's sister, a fourth's neighbour and so on and so forth—all came that day.

9. The wonderful relation of the Master with the women devotees

We are unable to express what a sweet relation the Master, devoid of the slightest tinge of desire, had with these chaste and virtuous women devotees. Many of them knew the Master even then as their chosen Ideal. Every one had that faith in him. Again, some fortunate ones among them knew this directly like Gopala's mother through visions etc. So they knew the Master as more than their own and did not feel any fear or hesitation in his presence. When they had prepared any nice food at home, in the first instance they set apart a portion of it for the Master before using it for the household and either sent it or themselves took it to him at Dakshineswar. It cannot be calculated how many times these ladies walked to Dakshineswar and back home during the Master's lifetime. On some occasions they returned home after sunset, on others, at 10 p.m., on still others, later than midnight after the Kirtan and festival etc., were over at Dakshineswar. The Master, like a boy, eagerly consulted some of them regarding the medicine for his stomach trouble. If any one smiled to see him do so, he said, "What do you know? She is the wife of a great doctor; she cannot but know a few medicines." About some one among them, when he saw her intense love towards Him, he said, "She is a Gopi perfected by God's grace." Of some other, when he had tasted the food cooked by her, he said, "She is a cook of Vaikuntha; she has a perfect hand in cooking Sukta" and so on.

10. The Master spoke of Gopala's mother's vision to the women devotees and sent for her

While he was taking refreshments, the Master spoke of the good fortune of Gopala's mother to the lady devotees. "That daughter of a Brahmin," said

he affectionately to them, “who comes from Kamarhati and who has motherly love for God as Gopala, has had various visions. She says that Gopala stretches his hand to take food from her. The other day she came here love-intoxicated on account of experiencing many such things. When she was fed she became a little pacified. I asked her to stay for the night, but she did not. She was equally inebriated on her way back. The cloth on her person became loose and was being dragged along the ground; she had no consciousness of it. I raised the cloth and passed my hand over her heart and head to calm her down a little. She has great devotion and she is very good. Why don’t you send for her?”

As soon as this reached Balaram Babu’s ear, he sent a man to bring Gopala’s mother from Kamarhati for there was much time yet for coming; the Master would be staying there for that day and the morrow.

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The Master finished taking refreshments and came back to the outer apartment and was having various talks with the devotees.

11. In the afternoon the Master became suddenly filled with the spirit of Gopala and Gopala’s mother arrived immediately after

Before long, the Master’s midday meal was finished. The devotees also took Prasada. He took a little rest before he sat in the hall in the outer apartment and conversed with the devotees on various topics. When it was about to be dusk the Master was in ecstasy. All of us must have seen the metal image of the boy Gopala—it is in the posture of crawling, with this difference that its right hand is raised in the gesture of asking for some food and its face is turned upwards as if it is looking at the face of some one with wistful eyes expressing delight and wanting something. The Master’s body and limbs assumed exactly that posture under the influence of Bhava, except for the two eyes which remained in a half-shut, indrawn condition, not seeing anything outside. Immediately after the Master’s state of Bhava began, the carriage carrying Gopala’s mother arrived and stood at the gate of Balaram Babu’s house; and Gopala’s mother came upstairs and saw the

Master in the form of her chosen Ideal. The devotees understood that it was the devotion of Gopala's mother that had brought about the sudden infusion of the Gopala-spirit into the Master. All those present there showed her great respect and reverence, thinking how very fortunate she was. All said, "Ah, the wonderful devotion! The Master assumed the form of Gopala Himself on account of the urge of her devotion!" and so on. Gopala's mother said, "But I don't like such a stiff and rigid posture, like a log of wood, under the influence of Bhava. My Gopala will laugh, play, walk and run. Ah! What is this? This stiff-as-wood posture! I don't want to see such a Gopala." On the day on which she first saw the Master thus lose normal consciousness in ecstasy, she really became overwhelmed with fear and said, as she pushed the Master's holy person, "Why are you in such a condition, my child?" That happened when the Master went to Kamarhati for the first time.

12. Whatever the Master did under the influence of Bhava looked beautiful. The reason

When we first went to the Master, he was nearly forty-nine years old—perhaps it was yet five or six months to his forty-ninth year. Gopala's mother also went to him at that time. Before we met the Master, our idea was that people would enjoy the artless dancing and gestures of a child, but that it would be nothing but ludicrous or disgusting to them when a grown-up robust youth performed such antics. Swami Vivekananda used to say, "Does one appreciate a rhinoceros dancing a dancing-girl's dance?" But, coming to the Master, we had to change our opinions. Though he was advanced in age, the Master danced, sang, made various gestures—and ah, how sweet they were! "We never dreamt", said Girish Babu, "that a grown-up robust youth looked so well when dancing." But how beautiful was the posture of his body and limbs under the influence of the infusion of the spirit of Gopala into him today at Balaram Babu's house. We did not understand then why all these looked so beautiful. We only felt that they were beautiful and nothing more. We now understand that, whenever any mood came on him, it came on fully without the admixture of any other mood with it, and with no touch of insincerity or showing off. He was then

completely inspired by, absorbed or, as he jokingly said, ‘diluted’[1] in that mood. It, therefore, could not at all strike in the minds of the people that a man of advanced age was acting as a boy or a woman! The strong waves of Bhava within burst out and completely changed his body or made it assume a different form altogether.

* * * *

13. The Master came back to Dakshineswar at the end of the festival

The Master had spent two delightful days and nights in the company of the devotees at the house of Balaram Babu. It was the third day and he was to return to Dakshineswar. It was about eight or nine in the morning. A boat was ready at the Ghat. Gopala’s mother and another woman devotee, it was settled, should go by that boat to Dakshineswar with the Master, besides one or two boy-devotees, who had come with him for his service. Kali (Swami Abhedananda) was perhaps one of them.

Going to the inner apartment the Master bowed down to Jagannath, received the salutations of the devotee-family, went out and got into the boat. Gopala’s mother and others also followed him there. Some members of Balaram’s family respectfully presented Gopala’s mother with clothes etc., and knowing that she was in need of a ladle, tongs for gripping hot cooking pots, and some other articles, they made presents of them to her; a bundle containing them was put in the boat. The boat started.

14. The Master was annoyed to see the bundle belonging to Gopala’s mother. He was all love to the devotees, but was all discipline as well

While he was going by the boat, the Master noticed the bundle and knew on inquiry that it belonged to Gopala’s mother. As soon as the Master heard that it was the bundle containing the things given to her by the devotee-family, his face assumed a serious attitude. Instead of addressing Gopala’s mother, he began speaking on renunciation to the other woman devotee, mother Golap. “One, who is a person of renunciation”, said he, “realizes

God. One, who, after taking one's food in people's houses comes away empty-handed, sits leaning against the body of the divine Lord, that is, can exert force, so to say, on the Lord because of his renunciation and dependence on Him", and so on. The Master did not speak a single word with Gopala's mother on the way that day and looked at the bundle now and again. Seeing that attitude of the Master, Gopala's mother thought, "Let me throw the bundle into the water of the Ganga." The Master used to joke, play and make merry with the devotees like a five-year-old boy but, when it was necessary, he could be very strict with them. He could not put up with the slightest improper conduct on the part of any devotee. Nothing, not even the smallest thing escaped his keen eye; as soon as anyone behaved improperly even in the slightest degree, his keen eye fell on him and the latter at once put forth his best efforts to correct himself. The Master had not to make much effort either; for, if he but looked stern and refrained from speaking with one a while, one would feel restless and repent the fault committed. A word or two of scolding from the Master's holy mouth were enough to set right those who had not corrected themselves even with this. The wonderful Master's wonderful way of dealing with, and his way of imparting instruction to, each devotee were to occupy the heart of the devotee first by his divine selfless love and then explain, just in a few words, what was to be done.

15. Gopala's mother was pained by the Master's expression of annoyance. The Holy Mother consoled her

As soon as she reached Dakshineswar, Gopala's mother anxiously went to the Holy Mother at the Nahavat and said to her, "O daughter-in-law, Gopala has been angry to see this bundle; what is the remedy now? I think I should not take the articles with me but distribute them here."

The supremely revered Holy Mother had boundless compassion. Seeing the old lady worried and pained, she consoled her and said, "Let him say so, mother. There is no one to give you these things. What will you do under the circumstances? Have you not brought these things only because you require them?"

In spite of what the Holy Mother told her, Gopala's mother gave out of those articles one piece of cloth and one or two other things. Then harried with fear, she cooked with her own hand one or two curries and went to feed the Master. The Master, who knew all people's hearts, did not make any other remark when he saw her repentant. He then treated her as before, speaking with her smilingly. Gopala's mother also was consoled, fed the Master and returned to Kamarhati in the evening.

Since her first vision, Gopala's mother, as we said before, had been seeing the ideal form of Gopala for two months without a break. But this did not continue so afterwards. Let no one think on that account that, after that period, she had the vision of the form of Gopala only very rarely, at long intervals. She saw Him daily time and again whenever her heart wanted to see Him. Again, whenever anything had to be taught her, Gopala would suddenly appear before her and make her act accordingly by signs or words or by doing things Himself, thus showing her how to do them. Merging in the Master's holy person again and again, Gopala taught her that He and the Master were not different. He taught her how He should be served, by asking her for things to eat and things to lie on. Again, strolling together with some eminent devotees of Sri Ramakrishna or moving with them with especial intimacy, in her presence, He convinced her that He and they were not different, that the devotee and the Divine were one. Therefore, the hesitation she felt in eating things touched by them gradually vanished.

16. The nature of the visions of Gopala's mother after she was firmly convinced that the Master was her chosen Ideal

Since she became firmly convinced that Sri Ramakrishna was her chosen Ideal, Gopala's mother did not very often have the vision of the form of Gopala. Instead, she had the vision of Sri Ramakrishna very frequently and through his form, the divine Lord, who assumed the form of Gopala, taught her whatever was necessary. Deprived of the frequent visions of the form of Gopala in the beginning, she went to Sri Ramakrishna and said weeping, "What have you done to me, Gopala? What fault have I committed? Why do I not have your vision (in the form of Gopala) as I used to have before?"

and so on. Sri Ramakrishna replied, “If, in the Kaliyuga, one has such vision continuously, one’s body does not last. It lasts twenty-one days only and then falls off like a dry leaf.” Gopala’s mother used always to be under the influence of divine inebriation of Bhava for two months after having the first vision of Gopala. She did everything—cooking, bathing, taking food, repeating continually God’s name, meditating on Him and the like—on the strength of past habits and also as it had to be done. Owing to past habits her body managed somehow or other to go through them; that was all. But she herself always remained highly intoxicated, as it were. How long, therefore, could the body last in this way? It is a matter of surprise that it continued even for two months. The influence of that intoxication diminished a great deal at the end of two months. But, as she could not see Gopala as before, there came on her an intense eagerness to have the vision repeatedly. As a result of that, the humour of wind prevailed in her constitution and she felt a great pain within her heart. She, therefore, said to Sri Ramakrishna, “Owing to the prevalence of the humour of wind, I feel as if my heart is being sawn through.” The Master consoled her and said affectionately, “It is not the humour of wind but the humour of Hari (God). What will be the support of your life if it goes? It is good that it abides. Please eat something whenever you feel too much pain.” So saying the Master fed her with various good things that day.

17. Marwari devotees came to the Master

Just as many of us, men and women, used to go to the Master, many Marwari men and women also visited him from time to time. They came in a good number of carriages to Dakshineswar garden and, after bathing in the Ganga, collecting flowers and performing the worship of Siva and other deities, assembled under the Panchavati, where they dug a fire-place and cooked various preparations and offered them to the deity. They then gave at first a part of all those things to the Master and afterwards took Prasada themselves. Many of them brought for the Master candy, grapes, almonds, guavas, raisins, pistachios, dry dates, betel leaves, pomegranates, etc., offered them and bowed down to him. For, they were not like most of us; all of them knew that one should not come empty-handed to the hermitages of

holy men or the places of deities and, therefore, they would without fail bring something or other with them. But Sri Ramakrishna did not himself take any of these things given by them, with the exception of one or two of the Marwaris. He said, “If they give one roll of betel, they join with it sixteen desires—‘may I win the law-suit in the court’, ‘may I recover from my disease’, ‘may I make profit in my trade’ and so on.”

18. The Master could not accept and eat things given to him with a motive; nor did he give them to the devotees to eat

The Master himself did not eat these things nor did he give them to the devotees to eat. But sometimes he would eat as sacred food a little of the cooked food which they had offered to the deity and then brought for him; and he would also give it to us to eat. The only person who was thought fit to take the candy, fruits, etc., given by them was Narendranath. The Master said, “He has the sword of knowledge ever unsheathed with him. He will not be harmed if he takes these things. His spiritual insight will remain unimpaired.” The Master, therefore, sent these eatables to Narendranath’s house through some one or other of the devotees who was available. He sent them through his nephew, Ramlal, the priest of the Kali temple, on those days on which no one else was available. One day, after his midday meal, the Master, we were told by brother Ramlal, said to him, “Well, have you no business in Calcutta?” He spoke thus lest Ramlal should be annoyed to be sent too often with those things.

Ramlal: “I have no business there at present. But if you ask me, I will of course go.”

Sri Ramakrishna: “No, I was just asking; you have not gone for a walk to Calcutta for a long time; you may have a desire to go. Why don’t you go just once? If you go, please take the money; that is there in that tin box and take a carriage on share from Baranagar; you will otherwise fall ill on account of the sun. And give Narendra these candy, almonds, etc., and bring me his news. He has not come here for a long time. My mind is extremely eager to have his news.”

Brother Ramlal said to us, “Ah, what hesitation, lest I should get annoyed!” It is needless to say that brother Ramlal took those opportunities

to come to Calcutta and, add to the happiness of the devotees.

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There thus came one day many Marwari devotees to Dakshineswar. Much candy, fruits, etc., accumulated that day, as usual, in the Master's room, when Gopala's mother and some other women devotees came unexpectedly to pay a visit to the Master. He saw Gopala's mother and came and stood beside her. Then, while passing his hand all over her body from head to foot, he began to express his love like a child when it meets its mother. Pointing at Gopala's mother's body, he said to all, "This case is filled with Hari only; this body consists of Hari alone." Gopala's mother stood still; she was not at all shrinking, though the Master touched her feet. Afterwards the Master brought all the nice things that were there in his room and fed the old lady with them. Whenever Gopala's mother went to Dakshineswar, the Master behaved similarly and fed her. One day she asked him, "Why do you like so much to feed me, Gopala?"

Sri Ramakrishna: "For, you fed me so much in the past."

Gopala's mother: "In the past? When did I feed you?"

Sri Ramakrishna: "In a previous life."

Passing the whole day at Dakshineswar, Gopala's mother took leave of the Master before returning to Kamarhati, when the Master brought and gave her all the candy given by the Marwaris and asked her to take it with her. Gopala's mother said, "Why do you give me so much candy?"

Sri Ramakrishna: (affectionately touching the chin of Gopala's mother) "You were at first molasses; you then became sugar and now you have become candy. Now that you have become candy, eat candy and be happy."

19. The Master gave Gopala's mother the candy given by the Marwaris

All were surprised when the Master gave to Gopala's mother the candy given by the Marwaris. They felt that, by the grace of the Master, the mind of Gopala's mother could no more be tarnished. Having no other course left open to her, she took all the candy; what else could she do? Gopala would

otherwise not cease importuning her. Besides, as long as the body lasted, one required everything, as Gopala's mother used sometimes to say to us, "So long as the body lasts, all things, even cumin-seeds, fenugreek-seeds, are necessary. A very strange state indeed!"

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20. No one should be told of one's vision

It was a long-standing habit with Gopala's mother to come and tell the Master everything she experienced while practising Japa and meditation. He said, "One should not tell any one else his or her visions. In that case visions cease to appear." So advised, one day Gopala's mother said to him, "Why? Those are facts regarding vision of you, of no one else. Should they not be told even to you?" The Master replied, "Though they are visions regarding this place, they should not be told even to me." Gopala's mother said, "Indeed." She did not, except on very rare occasions, speak of her visions to any one since then. A sincere and simple soul as Gopala's mother was, she had an absolute faith in whatever Sri Ramakrishna said. And doubting souls like ourselves? The whole of our lives is spent in testing the truth of his words. Therefore it did not fall to our lot to translate them into practice and be happy in the enjoyment of their results.

21. The Master introduced Gopala's mother to Swami Vivekananda

One day, at this time, both Gopala's mother and Narendranath were present at Dakshineswar. Narendranath had even then a great inclination towards the Brahmo Samaj doctrine of a formless God. He had even then a great dislike for so-called idolatry, for deities, images, etc. But then he had by that time had this conviction that even if people had resort to idols, images, etc., they might reach in time the formless Divine residing in all beings. The Master had a keen sense of humour. On the one hand, there was the very learned, intelligent Narendranath endowed with all the good qualities, fond of discussions and devoted to the divine Lord, while, on the other, there was the poor, indigent Gopala's mother, of simple faith, who

hoped to have the grace and vision of God bestowed on her by resorting to His name only, who never had had any literary education whatever and never knew what discussions and argumentations were even for acquiring divine knowledge. The Master got them both together and brought about great fun. He asked Gopala's mother to narrate to Narendra how she first had the vision of the divine Lord in the form of the boy Krishna and how He had been having His divine play with her since then. So asked, she said, "Will that not be harmful, Gopala?" Afterwards, assured by the Master and dissolved in tears, she began to narrate, in a choked voice, from the beginning to the end the whole story of the sport with her of the divine Lord in the form of Gopala for two months since her first vision of Him. She narrated how Gopala was on her lap with his head on her shoulder, how she came all the way from Kamarhati to Dakshineswar, how she distinctly saw his two purple feet dangling on her chest, how he entered the Master's body from time to time, came out again and then came to her, how he was grumbling when he did not get a pillow when going to bed, how he collected wood for cooking and how naughtily he behaved in order to get food. While narrating these events, the old lady was filled with emotions and began to visualize the divine Lord in the form of Gopala. Although Narendranath had an external-covering of rigid argumentation and the hope to acquire divine knowledge through that, inwardly he was always full of intense love of God. He could not refrain from shedding tears when he heard of the ecstasy, vision, etc., of the old lady. Again, as she was narrating the story, she artlessly asked Narendranath all along, "My child, you are learned and intelligent, I am miserable and indigent; I know nothing, understand nothing; please say if these things regarding me are mere imaginations or "realities." Narendranath also assured the old lady every time and said consoling her, "Mother, what you have seen are all true." The reason why Gopala's mother questioned Narendranath about it so anxiously was perhaps that she was not then having the vision of Gopala continuously as before.

22. Invited by Gopala's mother the Master went to the Kamarhati garden and saw a ghost there

One day at this time the Master came to Gopala's mother at Kamarhati with Rakhal; it was about ten in the morning. For, Gopala's mother had a great desire to cook nicely with her own hand and feed him once. The old lady was beside herself with joy to have the Master with her. She gave them for refreshment whatever she could procure. When they had finished taking it, she spread a bed comfortably in the Babu's parlour, asked them to rest there and girding up her loins, went to cook. She had procured various good things from others. She made various kinds of preparations and fed the Master to her full satisfaction at noon. She then affectionately made a bed for him to rest on, by spreading a sheet of cloth washed clean over her own quilt in the southern room on the first floor of the ladies' apartment. Rakhal also lay beside the Master. For, the Master looked upon Rakhal as his own child and treated him accordingly. The Master saw a strange thing there at that time. We venture to state it here only because it was heard from the Master himself; otherwise we would have suppressed it. The Master used to have only a little sleep during the whole of day and night. He was, therefore, lying quiet. Rakhal fell asleep by his side. The Master said, "A bad smell was felt. Then I saw two figures in a corner of the room. Their appearance was hideous. Out of their bellies, the entrails were hanging down and their faces, hands and feet were exactly like the human skeletons arranged in the Medical College, which I saw at some time. They said to me humbly, 'Why are you here? Please go away from this place; we feel much pained (perhaps to remember their own condition) to see you.' On the one hand they were thus supplicating and, on the other, Rakhal was sleeping. Seeing that they felt pained, I was going to get up and come away with my small bag and towel when Rakhal woke up and said, 'Where are you going?' Saying, 'I will tell you later on' and catching hold of his hand, I came downstairs, and taking leave of the old woman (she had just finished taking her food), I went and got into the boat. I then said to Rakhal, 'There are two ghosts there. The Mill of Kamarhati is situated near the garden. They live in that room by smelling (for, with them smelling is eating) the bones etc., thrown away by the Europeans after they have taken their meal.' I said nothing of it to the old woman lest she should get afraid for she had always to live alone in that house."

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23. The Master fed Gopala's mother with thickened milk at the Kasipur garden and said, "Gopala eats through her mouth"

Mati Jhil, the lake in front of the garden of the late Matilal Sil, a famous rich man of Calcutta, is situated on the road going north along the bank of the Ganga straight up to the Baranagar Bazar beyond the bridge. The garden house of Krishnagopal Ghosh, the son-in-law of Rani Katyayani (the wife of Lala Babu), is situated across the road to the east of the place, where the north part of this lake touches the road. It was in this garden that Sri Ramakrishna stayed for eight months, from the middle of December 1885 to the middle of August 1886, when he disappeared from the gross eyes of the devotees. It is this garden, called by them "the Kasipur garden", which, alas, produces great grief, and delight too in their minds! You may say, "The Master was then in his sick-bed, why then do you speak of delight?" Though apparently he was in a sick-bed, it cannot be expressed in words with what a wonderful bond of love the external manifestation of that disease in the divine person of the Master tied the devotees together; for, it led to the grouping of the devotees into different classes—devotees of the inner and outer circles, monks and householders, those of the path of knowledge and those of devotion—the differences becoming clearer. Again, it was here that the firm basis of the conviction that all of them belonged to the same family, was established. Besides, who could ever have an idea of the number of persons who came there and became blessed by having an immediate knowledge of the light of spirituality? It was here that Narendranath experienced the Nirvikalpa Samadhi as the result of his Sadhana. It was here that the twelve boy-devotees including Narendra had ochre cloths from the holy hand of the Master. And it was here again, in the afternoon (from three to four p.m.) of the first day of January 1886, in the course of his last walk in the garden path, that the Master was in an extraordinary ecstatic state of mind to see the devotees and imparted direct spiritual power to them by touching the hearts of all with his holy hand and said, "What more shall I say to you? May you have spiritual awakening." As in Dakshineswar, here also came every day crowds of people, men and

women. Here also the Holy Mother was daily engaged in the service of the Master, preparing his food and doing other household work, and Gopala's mother and other lady devotees also came to him and took part in the service of the Master and his devotees, some of them spending a night or two also before they returned. When, therefore, we think of the wonderful assemblage of the devotees at the Kasipur garden, it appears to us that the Mother of the universe produced the disease in the holy body of the Master only for the fulfilment of a great unknown purpose. It was here that, witnessing daily the Master's divine sports —the coming of new devotees, the Master's ever-blissful figure, the daily manifestation of his extraordinary powers—many devotees of long-standing thought that he only feigned his illness for the good of the people and he would discard the disease as soon as he liked and be in health again.

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During the days in the Kasipur garden the Master took only liquid food made of barley, vermicelli, farina, etc. One day he expressed a desire to take thickened milk prepared by mixing with it the powder of zedoary, as was generally given to invited guests on special occasions in the houses of the Calcutta people. Nobody raised any objection to it. For, as it was possible for him to take barley, farina-porridge, etc., they thought there was little chance of thickened milk aggravating the disease. The doctors also did not raise any objection. It was, therefore, settled that Yogindra should go to Calcutta early on the morrow, purchase and bring a little of such thickened milk from the market.

Yogindra started at the appointed time. On his way he thought, "The thickened milk available in the market is adulterated with many other things along with the powder of zedoary; will it not increase the illness if he takes it?" All the devotees looked upon the Master as the life of their lives; therefore, all had only one thought in their minds since he fell ill. It was certainly for that reason that such a thought arose in Yogin's mind. He thought again, "But I did not ask the Master about it before I left; therefore, will he not be annoyed if I were to have it prepared by some devotee and go back with it?" Thinking variously, Yogananda arrived at Balaram Babu's

house at Baghbazar, where when the devotees asked the reason of his coming, he said everything. All the devotees there said, “Why market milk? We ourselves will prepare it and give it to you. But it cannot be taken there at this time of the day, for it will require time to prepare it. So, please have your meal here now; in the meantime the milk will be got ready. Take it at three in the afternoon.” Yogin agreed, acted accordingly and came back to Kasipur at about four p.m. with the home-made milk.

Sri Ramakrishna had wanted to take the milk at noon and waited a long time for it; but at last he took his usual food. Afterwards, when Yogin returned, the Master heard everything, became much annoyed and said to him, “You were told to buy the milk from the market; I wished to take market-milk. Why did you go to the devotees’ house and give them trouble over it? Besides, this milk is too thick and hard to digest; can this be taken? I’ll not take it.” And in fact he did not touch it even. He asked the Holy Mother to feed Gopala’s mother with the whole of it and said, “It is a thing given by the devotees; Gopala is there in her heart; her taking it will be the same as my doing so.”

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24. Gopala’s mother saw the universe as the form of God

When the Master passed beyond the ken of gross human eyes, there was no limit to the distraction of Gopala’s mother. She did not go anywhere outside Kamarhati for a long time. She lived alone in her solitude. Afterwards, when she had visions of the Master as before, that mood of hers came to an end. We heard much of such visions which Gopala’s mother had even after the Master was out of sight. One of these visions was that, on one occasion, when she went to witness the Chariot festival at Mahesh, on the other side of the Ganga, her bliss overflowed all bounds when she had the vision of Gopala in all beings. She said that at that time she saw that the chariot, Jagannatha Deva on the chariot and those who were drawing the chariot, that vast crowd of people—all were her Gopala. But He had assumed different forms; that was all. Inebriated with affection and intense love at getting this direct indication of the universal form of the divine, she

lost normal consciousness. Once, personally describing it to a woman friend of hers, she said, “At that time I was not myself; I danced and laughed—created a second Kurukshetra (i.e., a battle scene).”

25. Gopala’s mother at the Baranagar monastery

Whenever she felt the least restlessness in her mind, she used to come since then to the Sannyasin devotees of the Master at the Baranagar monastery and had peace whenever she came. Whenever she came to the monastery, the Sannyasin devotees asked her to offer cooked food to the Master and feed him. Gopala’s mother also would be delighted, prepare one or two curries with her own hand and offer them to the Master. When the monastery was removed to Alambazar, and afterwards to Nilambar Babu’s house on the other side of the Ganga, Gopala’s mother came to those places also, remained the whole day there and enjoyed bliss. She spent the night also there on rare occasions.

26. Gopala’s mother with western women

When Sara (Mrs. Sara. C. Bull), Jaya[1] (Miss J. Macleod) and Nivedita came to India with Swami Vivekananda on his return from the West, one day they went to Kamarhati to see Gopala’s mother and were highly pleased with her talk and courtesy. Gopala’s mother saw her Gopala residing in them too. She, we remember, touched their chins and kissed them affectionately. She then lovingly made them sit on her own bed and gave them parched rice, balls of coconut, etc., which were there in her room to eat and, asked by them, told them a little of her visions. The Western ladies also ate those things with delight and were charmed to listen to those words of hers. They asked of her some parched rice in order to take it to America.

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27. Gopala’s mother at Sister Nivedita’s house

Hearing the wonderful story of the life of Gopala's mother, Sister Nivedita was so much charmed that, when in 1904 Gopala's mother became very ill and incapable of doing anything and was brought to Balaram Babu's house at Baghbazar, she expressed great eagerness to take her to her (Nivedita's) Baghbazar house at 17 Bosepara Lane and keep her there. Gopala's mother too agreed without the least hesitation, on account of Sister Nivedita's eagerness, and went to her house. For, Gopala, we said before, had removed her idea of difference regarding everything. We remember another event as an example of it. One day at Dakshineswar, Narendranath ate a cupful of goat's meat offered to the Mother Kali and went out to wash his hand. The Master asked a woman devotee to clean that place. Gopala's mother was standing there. The moment she heard that word of the Master she removed with her own hand those leavings, the bones etc., and cleaned that place. When the Master saw it, he became happy and said to the above-mentioned woman devotee, "Just see how liberal she is daily becoming."

28. The passing away of Gopala's mother

Gopala's mother lived at Sister Nivedita's residence since then. Nivedita, the Swami's spiritual daughter, served her as she would her own mother. The arrangement about her food was made in a Brahmin family hard by. Gopala's mother went there at meal time every day and took a little rice. At night some one of that family personally brought to her room a few Luchis and some other preparations. She lived for about two years in this manner and passed away in the waters of the Ganga. When she was taken according to Hindu rites, during her last days to the bank of the Ganga, Nivedita decorated, with her own hand, her bed, covering it beautifully with flowers, garlands, sandal-paste, etc., and had a party of Kirtan-singers brought and dissolved in tears she personally went with her, barefooted, to the bank of the Ganga. Nivedita spent her nights there for the two days Gopala's mother lived. Very early in the morning of the eighth of July 1906, when the eastern sky was assuming wonderful beauty on account of the reddish hue of the rising sun, when a few dim stars in the blue sky were twinkling and looking down on the earth and when the Ganga, the daughter of the "father of mountains", was full with her high tide and flooding both the banks with

white waves and flowing with a sweet, gentle murmur—Gopala's mother's body was gently and reverently placed half immersed in those waves, her five vital airs united with the feet of the Divine and she attained the eternal abode of fearlessness.

As there were none of her relatives present, a Brahmin Brahmacharin of the monastery at Belur performed her obsequies and observed the twelve-day-period according to the injunctions of the scriptures.

29. The story of Gopala's mother concluded

At the end of these twelve days, Sister Nivedita, with her heart pierced with grief, invited many ladies of the quarter known to Gopala's mother to her own school building and arranged for Kirtan, festivals, etc.

Before she passed away, Gopala's mother left to the care of the Belur monastery the picture of Sri Ramakrishna which she had been worshipping so long, to be kept in the temple there. She also gave a sum of two hundred rupees at that time for the service of the Master.

She considered herself to be a nun during the last ten or twelve years before she passed away and always used to put on ochre cloth.

Footnote

1. This image is now at Kothar.

1. But, in order to avoid being cumbrous, we have sometimes used I and mine in the direct form of speech of the Master, though, in the original, they were invariably the other two expressions.—Tr.

1. This was one of the few English words the Master himself employed.

1. The revered Holy Mother called them by those names and was very much pleased with their simplicity, devotion and faith.

APPENDIX
THE HUMAN ASPECT OF THE MASTER[1]

1. The generality of people have reverence for Sri Ramakrishna only because they hear of his Yogic powers

Many people speak many things about the divine nature of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. At the root of many people's faith, submission and reverence, is found, on inquiry, their admiration for his superhuman powers of Yoga. In reply to the question, "Why do you respect him?" the person interrogated generally says that Sri Ramakrishna could see events happening at great distances from the Dakshineswar temple on the Ganga; that he sometimes cured severe physical diseases by his touch; that he always had communication with gods and goddesses and that his words were so infallible that any word coming out of his mouth, though seemingly unlikely to correspond to facts, would change and control the events of external nature. For example, the speaker might continue, it may be said that even a person condemned to death by the court was saved from sure death and was specially honoured instead, only because the Master bestowed a little of his grace and blessing on him; or that a white flower was produced on a tree which invariably produced red flowers only; and so on.

Or, he might say that Sri Ramakrishna could know others' thoughts; that his keen insight could fathom the thoughts, constitution and even the inclinations of the mind of every man by piercing the gross covering of his body and that at the mere touch of his delicate hand, there appeared before the eyes of the devotees of even restless. minds the forms of their chosen Ideals and they experienced deep meditation; and in the case of some particularly fit persons, the gate to the Nirvikalpa Samadhi opened.

Again, some would say, “We don’t know why we revere him. Ah, what a wonderfully perfect ideal of knowledge and devotion we saw in him! We do not see it even in the ideal persons worshipped by the world, who are mentioned in such books as the Vedas and the Puranas, not to speak of living or known human beings. To our eyes, compared with him, these seem to be of little splendour. We are unable, to say whether it is a hallucination of our mind; but our eyes have become dazzled with that bright effulgence and our minds merged for ever in his love; they do not turn back even if we try to convince them. Knowledge, inference and reasoning have all been set at rest. We can say only this:

“I am Thy servant birth after birth, O Sea of mercy; I don’t know Thy destination. And mine? I don’t know it either. And who wants to know it? I have by Thy command done away with everything—enjoyment, salvation, devotion, Japa, Sadhana, etc. The only thing that remains is a desire to know Thee; take me beyond that also, O Lord.”[1]

It is therefore clear that, if we leave out the cases of the few last mentioned persons, all other people have devotion to, faith in and reliance on him on account of his gross external powers or subtle mental powers only. Men of gross intellect think that, if they revere him, their diseases etc., will be cured or, at the time of their danger or difficulty, external events will be regulated in their favour. It does not take one long to see that this current of selfishness is flowing in their minds though they do not plainly admit it.

The people of the second class, who have a somewhat subtle intellect, revere him only because they will attain powers of clairvoyance etc., and live in places like Goloka by being counted among his followers, the principal or the subordinate ones. Or, if they are a little more advanced intellectually, they think they will attain Samadhi and become liberated from the bondage of birth, old age, etc. It is easily understood that their own self-interest is at the root of this faith too.

2. Though all this is true, our aim is not to discuss this subject: for selfish devotion is harmful to progress

Although we have had many such examples of Sri Ramakrishna’s divine powers and although we have no doubt that devotion offered to him even

with the motive of fulfilling one's own desired objects is productive of endless good, a discussion on these subjects is not our aim. Our aim is, on the contrary, an attempt to draw a picture of his human traits.

Devotion with a motive—devotion for removing any kind of want of the devotees—prevents them from ascending to the highest step of the knowledge of truth. Selfishness always produces fear, which again soon makes man weak. The attainment of man's self-interest increases egoism and, sometimes, idleness in his mind and veils his vision. Therefore, he cannot see the real truth. This is why Sri Ramakrishna used to keep a special eye on the circle of his devotees so that the said defect might not creep into them. Whenever he came to know that any new mental powers, clairvoyance and the like, had been manifested in some of his disciples as a result of their practice of meditation etc., he forbade them from such practice for some time, lest egoism should arise in their minds and make them lose sight of the aim of God-realization. We witnessed this many times. We heard him say over and over again that to possess those powers was not the aim of human life. But weak man does not proceed to do anything or revere any one without calculating his profit and loss and, instead of learning renunciation from the life of Sri Ramakrishna, who was a glowing picture of that quality, resorts to that great life for the fulfilment of his own enjoyment. He thinks that Sri Ramakrishna's extraordinary austerities, his renunciation, his unusual love for truth, his childlike simplicity, his reliance on God—all these were practised for the fulfilment of his (the devotee's) enjoyment, as it were. Human weakness is the only reason for this attitude. Therefore, a discussion of the human traits of Sri Ramakrishna will be of great benefit to us.

3. Real devotion will make the wor-shipper similar to the worshipped

It is well known in all the religious books of all peoples that even a little, of devotion, if practised rightly, makes the devotee similar to the object of his worship. The oozing of blood from the hands and feet of the devotee whose mind was absorbed in the figure of Jesus on the cross, the great burning sensation in the body of Sri Chaitanya and his occasional corpse-like states due to his identification with the pain of separation from God felt

by Srimati, the motionless posture of the Buddhist devotee for a very long time before the motionless figure of Buddha in meditation—all these and other similar events point to this fact. We have seen with our own eyes also that the love towards a particular man has made the lover, slowly and without his knowledge, similar to the object of his love; his external gestures, his deportment and the currents of his thoughts also have changed and become similar to those of the object of his love. If the love and devotion to Sri Ramakrishna also do not daily make our life, at least a little, similar to his, it should be understood that the said love and devotion are not worth the name.

There may arise the question, "Can then every one of us become a Paramahamsa Ramakrishna? Has it ever been seen in the world that one man has become completely similar to another?" Although they cannot be exactly similar, they, we reply, can surely be like things cast in the same mould. The life of each great soul in the spiritual world is like a special mould. Cast in those moulds the successive generations of their disciples have been preserving those different moulds till today. Man's power is small; a whole life's effort is not enough for him to become like any one of those prototypes. If, fortunately, any one is ever formed really similar to any one of the models, we call him a perfect soul and revere him as such. All the physical and mental actions—speech, thought, deportment, etc.,—of a perfected man become similar to those of the great soul, the founder of the faith. The mind and body of the former become fully developed instruments for containing, preserving and imparting to others that great power, the first manifestation of which in the latter had earlier astonished the world. Different people have thus been preserving from time immemorial the spiritual powers transmitted by different great personalities.

4. The extraordinary things we become acquainted with, by a study of the life of an incarnation

The great souls that lead wonderful unprecedented lives in the realm of spirituality and thus leave new moulds behind are even today worshipped by the world as incarnations of God. Incarnations discover new religious doctrines, new paths. They impart the power of spirituality to others by a

mere touch. Their energy is never directed to the glamour of lust and gold in this transitory world. It becomes clear by a study of their lives that they are born to show us the path to God-realization. To secure their own enjoyment or their own liberation has never been the aim of their lives. But their sympathy with the sorrows of others and their love for them have urged them on to action and led to the discovery of the path leading to the removal of the sorrows and miseries of others.

We were not let into the secret of the holy lives of the persons known as incarnations, such as Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Sankara, Chaitanya and others till we had the blessing of seeing the divine form of Sri Ramakrishna. We laboured under the misconception that the record of the uncommon events in their lives were later additions by disciples, with the ulterior motive of adding to their own number. And the incarnations themselves, we inferred, were queer, imaginary beings beyond the ken of the civilized world. Or, when it was at all conceded that God could assume forms and incarnate Himself, it could not be believed that human traits like those in us were present in those incarnations also. It could not be easily conceived that their bodies could be subject to diseases, that pain and pleasure were present in their minds and that a fight between God and Satan could ever have gone on in them as in us, ordinary mortals. We have come to know this truth through the holy contact of Sri Ramakrishna. We have all read or heard of the wonderful harmony of divine and human traits in the persons of incarnations. But, before we met Sri Ramakrishna, we thought that there could be no harmony, in any man, of childlike simplicity and austere manhood. Many say that it is only his simplicity of a five-year-old boy that attracts them. A helpless boy, ignorant of worldly ways, is an object of love on the part of all people, who are naturally prompt to protect him. Such a feeling arose in the minds of men to see Sri Ramakrishna, though he was advanced in age. They were thereby charmed and attracted towards him. This is no doubt true to a certain extent; but our idea is that it was not this trait alone that attracted people in general. But as we see that the feelings of faith and devotion arose in the minds of the visitors simultaneously with love and delight, it seems that the mighty power within, veiled with a covering of childlike simplicities, delicate like a flower, was the cause of

that attraction. Describing the superhuman character of Sri Ramachandra, the king of Ayodhya, the famous poet[1] of India wrote:

"Who can know the minds of superhuman souls, harder than adamant but softer than flowers?"

The same remark applies to Sri Ramakrishna too.

The childlike nature Sri Ramakrishna is a novel thing. Although fathomless faith, unbounded simplicity, and an infinite love of truth were always manifested in his mind, worldly-minded people saw in it nothing but foolishness and a lack of worldly wisdom. He had a deep faith in the words of all people, specially of those who assume external emblems of religion. The ideas current in the country and his own village contributed a great deal to the manifestation of that wonderful trait in him.

5. The village of Kamarpukur, the birth-place of Sri Ramakrishna

A vast stretch of land extends over many square miles covered by green paddy plants, lending the appearance of a green sea or, in the absence of those plants, appearing in its true grey but presenting the same sweep of a sea; it is studded over, as by groups of islands, by small cottages of peasants, neat and clean, and made of earth, under the shade of clusters of bamboos and trees like the banyan, date, mango, peepul, etc. Here and there are deep big tanks of blue waters like the Haldarpukur surrounded by rows of tall palm trees, covered with deeper blue leaves and abounding in rosy lotuses with the humming bees around them. A few small but famous temples of stone or brick are there where deities like "Old Siva" are installed; yonder lie the ruins of the fort Mandaran; closer on the outskirts lie the ancient crematoria with the bones of the village forbears lying scattered here and there. Just beside them there are the pastures, covered with green grass; farther still are the dense mango grove and the noted meandering streamlet, and the ever crowded long public road from Burdwan to Puri, which encircles more than half of the village; this is Kamarpukur, the birth-place of Sri Ramakrishna.

6. The wonderful behaviour of the boy Ramakrishna

The Vaishnava religion, founded by Sri Chaitanya and his disciples, is prevalent there. The peasants sing the songs composed by the Vaishnava poets while working. In the evening when the day's work is done, they drown their fatigue in the bliss derived from these songs. A simple poetic faith lies at the root of this religion; for such faith and religion as of this village, situated far away from the rough waves of the competitive struggle for existence, a boy's heart is a very favourable field. But the childlike behaviour of the boy Ramakrishna was regarded as wonderful in this respect too. Everybody was surprised to see the sublimity of his aim and his one-pointedness thereto, even if they failed to understand his extraordinary actions. Hearing from the mouths of the expounders of the Puranas that a man uttering the name of Rama becomes purified, this boy reflected, "Why then does the expounder himself require even now purification by ablution etc.?" Or, listening only once to a drama, he knew all the parts by heart and sometimes acted the drama with his friends in the mango grove. Seeing and hearing the wonderful acting and music, the wayfarer, on his way to another village, was charmed and forgot to continue his journey. The boy's cleverness manifested itself in other ways too, in making images, in painting the pictures of deities, in mimicry, in music and Sankirtan, in getting by heart the *Ramayana,* the *Mahabharata,* the *Bhagavata* and other scriptures on hearing their recitals, and in the deep apprehension of the beauty of Nature. He was, we have heard from him, in ecstasy for the first time on seeing a flight of snow-white cranes against the background of deep black rain-bearing clouds. He was then six or seven years old.

To become absorbed in the mood that came to him, was the special characteristic of this boy's mind. Pointing to the courtyard of the house of a merchant, the neighbours tell even now how the person who was to act as Siva in the "Conversation between Siva and Parvati", became suddenly ill and was unable to act his part; how every one requested Ramakrishna to put on Siva's dress and act the part; but how, putting on that dress, he was so deeply absorbed in that mood that he lost all normal consciousness for a long time. The restlessness of mind proper to a boy, it is evident, did not touch him, though he was indeed a boy in age. Whenever he was attracted by anything through his eyes or ears, its picture was so firmly imprinted in

his mind that it was impossible for this boy to be at rest without mastering it wholly and expressing it in a novel form.

7. His search for truth

Coming in contact with the external world, his senses developed quickly and had not to depend on books and pictures. The radical principle of his life was this, namely, “I’ll understand truth, but only after having subjected it to close scrutiny. If it stands the test, I’ll reduce it to practice. And I’ll not look down upon anything of the world if it is not untrue.” At the dawn of his youth, Ramakrishna, who possessed such a wonderful memory and intellect, was sent to a school for education; but that peculiar childlike nature of his did not come to an end. He thought, “What purpose will it all serve—this hard study, this sitting up late at night, this rumination of the glosses and commentaries? Will this help me in attaining the truth?” Pointing to the teacher of the school, who was a finished product of that kind of education, his mind said, “You also will become like him, clever at ascribing ingenious meanings to simple words; you also will manage somehow your worldly affairs like him with some money, received as farewell presents earned by flattering the rich, and you also will read the truths recorded in the scriptures and teach them to others, but, ‘like an ass carrying sandal wood’, will not be able to realize them in life.” His discriminating intellect told him, “There is no need for that bread-winning education which enables one to ‘bundle up rice and plantain.’ Go rather for that supreme education which will enable you to realize the whole truth, the hidden mystery of human life.” Ramakrishna gave up going to school, and applied his mind to the worship of the blissful image of the Devi; but where was peace even in that? His mind said, “Is it true that She is the universal Mother, the embodiment of bliss or but a stone image? Is it true that She accepts leaves, flowers, fruits, roots, etc., offered to Her with devotion? Is it true that a gracious glance of Hers liberates man from all kinds of bondage and endows him with divine knowledge? Or, is it a superstition of the human mind, augmented by fond imagination and tradition of ages that has produced this unreal shadowy figure? And has man thus been deceiving himself from time immemorial?” His mind became extremely eager to solve

that great problem and, side by side, the sprout of intense detachment grew slowly and imperceptibly in that simple mind. His marriage took place, but without solving that problem how was it possible for him to enjoy worldly pleasures? His mind always remained engrossed in attempting the solution of that problem in various ways; and marriage, worldly affairs, worldly thoughts, earning money, enjoyment and even the extremely necessary eating, drinking, walking and sleeping were all reduced to a useless memory. The childlike nature of Sri Ramakrishna, which, became the object of ridicule for the worldly-wise at far off Kamarpukur, became much more developed in the Dakshineswar temple and was regarded as insanity, more contemptible to that worldly wisdom. But was there any incoherence and aimlessness in it? "I'll have the immediate knowledge of the Reality beyond the senses, I'll touch It and taste It in the fullest measure" —was not this the special characteristic of that insanity? That adamantine determination of the mind, that unconquerable perseverance, that crystal-clear sincerity and that one-pointedness of purpose which produced a novel beauty in the boy Ramakrishna at Kamarpukur, now constituted the insanity of Ramakrishna! What an unprecedented event!

A violent storm went on raging unabated in his mind for twelve long years. Tossed violently by the waves of doubt and disbelief, the life's tiny boat of Sri Ramakrishna was perilously near sinking. But that heroic heart never gave way, was not frightened at the sure prospect of immediate death. It went forward along its own path with only one thing to support and sustain it—the love of the divine and faith in it. The clamour in the world produced by lust and gold, and what people call good and bad, merit and demerit, vice and virtue, were all left far below; and the mighty waves of Bhava took him up above the petty squabbles of a humdrum life. This extraordinary surge of endless emotions and the practice of severe penances shattered Sri Ramakrishna's strong body and mind but gave them new forms and new beauties. It was thus that the fully developed instrument for containing and imparting great truths, and the Mahabhava, the supreme love of God, were made ready.

8. The result of the search for truth

Will you, O man, be able to comprehend the story of this wonderful heroism? In your gross eyes the weight and worth of a thing are determined by bulk or quantity. How can you have an idea of that power which, discarding the slightest tinge of selfishness, uproots egoism so thoroughly as to render it impossible for the body and mind to be even engaged in any kind of selfish effort, however small? The hands of Sri Ramakrishna used to become stiff and benumbed on consciously or unconsciously touching any metal—to grab it was out of the question! He lost his way when he was coming along the path always familiar to him if he took, knowingly or unknowingly, even very trifling things like leaves, flowers, etc., without the permission of the owner, and had to turn back. If he tied a knot, his respiration remained suspended till he untied it and the outgoing breath would not come out in spite of much effort. His organ of generation would shrink, like the limbs of a tortoise, instantaneously if his body was touched by any lewd woman. Where will human eyes—accustomed to looking to self-interest only from birth—have the vision of those purest mental states, whose manifestations these physical changes were? Can even our wildest flight of imagination enter into the purest realm of those ideas? We have learnt from our birth how to hide our impure ideas within and show ourselves off as purity itself. How many of us will entertain a scruple in concealing truth if we can become rich or famous by deceit? Take again, courage. Although we may not be bold enough to give ten blows for one or to run up towards and seize a cannon vomiting fire and to give up our life for the fulfilment of our own interests, we appreciate and feel proud to hear of such deeds. But, can we appreciate and feel the glow of that courage by whose promptings Sri Ramakrishna renounced the enjoyments of the earth and heaven and risked even his mind and body for the sake of a thing beyond the senses, unknown and unfamiliar to the world? If you can, O heroic reader, you have attained the immortality held in veneration by ourselves and others.

9. The deep meaning of the simple words of Sri Ramakrishna

No one had the power to understand how deep were the meanings of his very trifling words and actions, unless they were explained by himself. One

day he explained to us why he mentioned names of familiar persons or things or touched them as soon as his ecstasy came to a close, or why he named some article of food and said that he would eat or drink it. He said, "The minds of people in general roam in the nerve centres of the anus, of the organ of generation and of the navel only. A little purified, that, mind sometimes ascends to the centre in the heart and, having the vision of light or luminous figures, enjoys bliss. When the mind gets deeply habituated and sticks steadfastly to one ideal to the exclusion of all others it goes up to the centre in the throat and it becomes almost impossible for it to talk of any thing except that ideal on which it dwells ever more. Even when the mind has ascended there, it may go down to the lower centres and altogether forget that devotedness. But if somehow or other, with the help of extremely exceptional one-pointedness, it can reach the centre between the eyebrows, it goes into Samadhi and enjoys a bliss, compared with which the enjoyment of the objects of senses in the lower centres seems to it to be contemptible; all fear of falling from there vanishes for ever. There the light of the supreme Self with a little veiling is manifested to it. Although there remains just a little separation from it, a good knowledge of the non-dual supreme Self is obtained as soon as the mind ascends there. The moment this centre is crossed, the knowledge of difference and non-difference vanishes altogether and the mind is established in the perfect knowledge of non-duality. My mind comes as far down as the centre in the throat and that too for your education. But it has somehow to be kept down by force even there. As it has remained for six months in the full knowledge of Oneness, it has a natural inclination in that direction. If the mind is not tied to trifling desires—I'll do this, I will, eat that; I'll see this person, I'll go to that place, and so on—it becomes very difficult to bring it down. And, if it does not come down, everything—talking, walking, eating, keeping the body alive and the like—becomes impossible. This is why, at the very time of going into ecstasy, I entertain such trifling desires as 'I'll smoke, I'll go to that place, etc'; but even then, the mind comes down that much only, when those desires are mentioned again and again."

The author of the *Panchadasi* says, "A man does not like to change, after attaining Samadhi, the circumstances or environments in which he was before attaining it. For, all things or states, except the reality of Brahman,

seem absolutely hollow to him." Some indications to prove how the life of Sri Ramakrishna was lived before the aforesaid current of the love of God began to flow, were obtained in his ordinary day to day actions at Dakshineswar. We proceed to give a few of them here.

10. The Master's daily habits—his likes and dislikes

It was his habit to keep his body, clothes, beddings, etc., very clean. He himself loved to keep things in their proper places and taught others to do so; he felt annoyed if anyone did otherwise. At the time of going to any place he enquired whether his towel, the small bag, etc., had all been taken without any omission and also at the time of returning from there, he reminded the disciple who was with him, lest he should forget to take everything with him. He used to be anxious to do a thing at the exact time. When he had said he would do a thing, he would do it. He did not receive a thing from the hand of anyone except the person from whom, he said, he would take it, lest he should be guilty of falsehood. Even if such insistence produced any amount of inconvenience for a long time, he would put up with it. When he saw anyone using a torn piece of cloth, umbrella, foot-wear, etc., Sri Ramakrishna gave him instruction to buy a new one if he was able to do so, and if not, he himself would sometimes buy one for him. He used to say, "Fortune frowns at a man who uses such things and he loses grace." Words indicative of pride or egoism would never come out from his holy mouth. When he had to speak of his own idea or opinion, he pointed at his own body and used the words, "the idea of this place", "the opinion of this place", and the like. He used to observe minutely the conformation of all the features and limbs of the disciple's body, such as, the eyes, the face, the hands and the feet, as well as his actions, his deportment, eating, drinking, walking and sleeping,—he could by so doing accurately ascertain the course of his mental faculties, the degree of his development and the like, so that we never found him wrong on such matters, in our very intimate dealings with him.

Many say that each of those who went to Sri Ramakrishna thought that Sri Ramakrishna loved him more than he did all others. The deep sympathy that he had with the weal and woe of each one's life was, it seems to us, the

only cause of it. Although sympathy and love are two different things, the external characteristics of the latter are not very different from those of the former. It was, therefore, not impossible that sympathy was taken for love. It was an innate characteristic of Sri Ramakrishna's mind to become absorbed in each thing at the time of thinking of it. Owing to this, he could exactly know the state of each disciple's mind and could rightly prescribe whatever was necessary for the improvement of that state. In the course of describing Sri Ramakrishna's childlike nature we have tried to show how fully he learnt from his childhood the use of his eyes and other senses. It was this education which stood him in good stead in moulding human characters. He had a special eye on his disciples so that they might also learn the use of their senses regarding everything everywhere. He daily taught them to have recourse to reason before performing any action. We heard him say again and again that it was reason alone which would reveal the merits and demerits of things and make the mind go forward towards true renunciation. He had never any liking for a person of a narrow intellect or of one devoid of it. Every one heard him say, "You should be a devotee, it is true, but why should you, therefore, be a fool?" Or, "Don't be one-idea'd; that is not the attitude of this place; the attitude of this place is, 'I'll eat (fish) in different preparations, as soup, pungent, sour and so on'." It was "one-sided" intellect that he called a dull and drab attitude. "How monotonous!" were his words of scolding to the disciple who could not feel delight in any but a particular aspect of the divine Lord. He used these words of scolding in such a way that the disciple had to hide his face for shame. It was undoubtedly under the impulse of this liberal, universal idea that he became engaged in practising all the modes of Sadhana of all faiths and was able to discover the grand truth, "As many faiths, so many paths."

11. How Sri Ramakrishna's preaching of religion took place and will take place in future

The flower blossomed. Mad to taste the honey, the bees from this country and abroad came flying from all quarters. The full-blown lotus, its heart perfectly uncovered by the touch of the sun's rays, was equally generous and did not spare its store to make them fully contented. Has the world ever

before had the taste of the immortal honey of spirituality which Sri Ramakrishna gave it—Sri Ramakrishna, who was altogether innocent of Western education and whose life was built on the pattern of the eternal religion of India, regarded by moderners as superstition? Has the world ever before witnessed the play of that great power of spirituality which Sri Ramakrishna accumulated and imparted to his disciples, and under the forceful impulse of which the people, in spite of the light of modern science, are realizing that religion is an object of immediate knowledge, something living and moving that can be experienced; and are perceiving that an under-current of a universal, eternal and unchangeable religion has been flowing in the hearts of all the different religions and is vivifying them all? Have the words of hope and assurance been ever before proclaimed to the world, that man, travelling from truth to truth, like the wind from flower to flower, is slowly and gradually proceeding towards an immutable non-dual Truth and will some day realize without fail that endless and boundless Truth beyond mind and speech? The "one-sided" attitude of the religious world, which the teachers of religion like Krishna, Buddha, Sankara, Ramanuja, Chaitanya and others of India and Jesus, Mohammad and others of countries abroad could not remove, was completely destroyed in his own life by that illiterate Brahmin boy who succeeded in establishing a true harmony between the apparently contradictory doctrines of various religions and thus achieved a grand impossible feat. Has any one ever seen such a picture? Is it possible to ascertain the place of this god-man in the spiritual world? We dare not try. We can say this much, that the lifeless India has become much purified and awakened by the touch of his feet; that it is destined to occupy a place of glory amongst the nations of the world; that hope and blessing will emanate from it to the world around; that it has raised man above gods and has made him worthy of being worshipped by them for the privilege of his investment with a human body; and that the world has witnessed in Swami Vivekananda only the beginning of the display of the wonderful Power which has been awakened by Sri Ramakrishna.

Footnote

1. An article read by the author in a meeting convened at the Belur monastery on the occasion of the seventy-second birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna.

1. A quotation from a poem by Swami Vivekananda.

1. Bhavabhuti.

PART FIVE

SRI RAMAKRISHNA
THE GREAT MASTER

THE MASTER IN THE DIVINE
MOOD AND NARENDRANA

PREFACE

In this Fifth Part of *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* which is now published, the events of the Master's life, from the time when he first became acquainted with the Brahmo devotees to the time when he came to Calcutta for treatment of his throat disease and stayed at Shyampukur,[1] have been recorded as far as possible. During this time the Master was fully established in the divine mood and all his actions and behaviour were prompted by this mood. Again, this part of his life was united for ever with Narendra's (Swami Vivekananda's) life in such a sweet relationship that, when we go to study this part of the Master's life, the story of Narendra's life presents itself, simultaneously. The present part of the book has accordingly been called, "The Master in the Divine Mood and Narendranath".

We could not imagine, when we began to write the *play of the divine Mother as Sri Ramakrishna,* that we could ever proceed so far. Considering all things we are convinced that it has been rendered possible by his inconceivable grace only. Bowing down, therefore, at his lotus feet again and again, we humbly place this Part before the reader.

AUTHOR

Second day of the bright fortnight,
Phalgun 20, B.E. 1325 (A.D. 1919)

Footnote

1. To which has been added the last chapter dealing with the events at Kasipur, which first appeared in the Bengali monthly *Udbodhan* as articles.—Tr.

CHAPTER I—SECTION 1
THE INFLUENCE OF THE MASTER ON THE BRAHMO SAMAJ

1. The love and regard of Kesav and other Brahmos for the Master

The general public of Calcutta could know of the Master only when he met Kesavchandra, the leader of "the Brahmo Samaj of India". We have said before that Kesav, who appreciated merit wherever it was found, was much attracted towards the Master from the day he saw him first. Although he was inspired with Western ideas and ideals, his heart was filled with a real love of God and it was impossible for him to enjoy the nectar of devotion all by himself. As he was getting more and more light on the path of his life's journey from the Master's illuminating words and contacts, he freely told the public about it and invited them enthusiastically to come and share with him the joy and bliss of his holy company. It is therefore seen that all the English and Bengali newspapers of that society, such as *Sulabha Samachara, Sunday Mirror, Theistic Quarterly Review,* etc., were full of discussions about the pure character, words of wisdom and the liberal religious tenets of the Master. Kesav and other Brahmo leaders were seen to repeat on many occasions the Master's words from the altar as they addressed the congregations at the end of their lectures and prayers. Again, whenever they had leisure, they went to Dakshineswar with a few members of their inner circle, sometimes with the whole party, and spent some time in holy conversation with the Master.

2. The loving relation of the Master with the Brahmos

Feeling delighted with the thirst for spiritual illumination and love of God of these Brahmo leaders, the Master spared no efforts to encourage them to dive deep into the sea of Sadhana and be blessed with the pearl of the immediate knowledge of God. So great was his joy in the singing and conversation on God with them that he did not mind going uninvited very often to Kesav's house for the purpose. Thus a close and intimate relation grew up between the Master and many persons of that Society, who were real seekers of truth. He also went sometimes to the houses of the Brahmos other than Kesav and added to their happiness. For example, he often visited, especially during celebrations, the houses of Manimohan Mallick of Sinduriapati, Jayagopal Sen of Mathaghasa Lane, Venimadhav Pal of Sinti in Baranagar, Kasiswar Mitra of Nandanbagan and other persons, all followers of the Brahmo faith. On some occasions it so happened that, seeing the Master suddenly enter the temple while he was giving instruction from the altar, Kesav came down from it even before finishing the sermon, received him cordially and brought to a close the prayer of the day, listening to his words and enjoying the bliss of Kirtan with him.

3. The reason why the Brahmos regarded him as a follower of their faith

It is with the people of one's own community only that one can mix freely and enjoy bliss without any reserve. It was not, therefore, a matter of surprise that, seeing him mixing and enjoying bliss with them in that way, the Brahmos came to the conclusion that the Master was a man of their own religious mood and persuasion. On finding that the Master joined with them and enjoyed their company in the same manner, all the communities, the Saktas, the Vaishnavas and others amongst the Hindus, felt similarly on many occasions. For, who would then have understood that the Master could behave so naturally with all sects and faiths only because he was ever dwelling in Bhavamukha? But the people of the Brahmo Samaj had not the slightest doubt that, when he joined them in their prayers, he merged in thought and Kirtan of the formless Brahman with attributes, enjoyed a far greater bliss than they did and truly had the direct realization of an extraordinary Light, while they saw but darkness. They also understood that unless they could offer their all to God and become absorbed in Him, even

as he did, the taste of that kind of joy and vision would remain a far-off cry for them.

4. The Master advanced the Brahmo aspirants along the path of Sadhana

Seeing the love of truth, the disposition to renunciation and the thirst for spirituality and other good qualities of the members of the Brahmo Samaj of India, the Master tried to help them forward on their own chosen path of religion. He always looked upon those who loved God,—to whatever community they belonged — as very closely related to him and helped them unstintedly so that they might attain perfection by proceeding along their own paths. Again, the Master always said that all the true devotees of God were a class by themselves and never hesitated to eat and drink with them. It is therefore superfluous to say that he would look with affection upon Kesav and the members of his congregation, such as Vijaykrishna Goswami, Pratapchandra Majumdar, Chiranjiv Sarma, Sivanath Sastri, Amritalal Bose and others, that he would be ready to help them spiritually and would never hesitate to eat and drink with them. It did not take him long to understand that, under the influence of Western education, they were being carried far away from the religious ideal of the nation and were regarding social reform as the acme of their practice of religion. He, therefore, tried to make them accept the realization of God as the ideal of their lives even if their Society failed to follow them to that extent. As a result, Kesav and his party went forward very far on the path shown by him. The custom of addressing God by the sweet name of Mother and worshipping God as Mother were introduced into the Samaj; the Master's ideas and ideals entered into the music, literature, etc., of that Society and filled it with sweetness. That was not all. The leaders of that Samaj could know through the Master's life that there was much to learn from and think about those ideals and practices of the Hindu religion from which the Samaj had seceded, cutting itself off under the impression that they were erroneous and superstitious.

5. Why the Master asked the Brahmos to take his words as far as they appeared practicable to them

The Master realized from the beginning that, imbued with Western ideas, Kesav and his companions would not rightly understand all his ideas and instructions, and whatever they could understand would not all be to their taste. Remembering this at the time of giving them instruction, he said to them, “I have said whatever came into my head, you may accept them minus their ‘head and tail’.” Again, it did not take him long to know that with many members of the Brahmo Samaj, social reform and the satisfaction of the desire for enjoyment came to be the aims of life. This he expressed also in jest on many occasions. He said:

6. The Master taught through jokes

“I went to Kesav’s place and witnessed their prayer. After dilating upon the powers of the Divine for a long time, the priest said, ‘Let us now meditate on Him.’ I wondered how long they would meditate. But, ah, scarcely had they shut their eyes for two minutes when it was all finished! Can one realize Him by meditating thus? I looked at the faces of them all when they were meditating. Afterwards I said to Kesav, ‘I have seen many of you meditate, but do you know what thought came to my mind? Troops of monkeys sometimes sit quiet, under the tamarisk trees at Dakshineswar, as if they were perfect gentlemen, wholly innocent. But they were not such; they sat and thought of those roofs of householders where there were gourds,pumpkins, etc., or of those gardens where there were plantains and egg fruits. And in a short time, they would jump off to the garden with a yell, pluck them and fill up their stomachs. I saw many meditate that way.’ They heard this and laughed.”

The Master would thus teach us also through jokes. One day, Swami Vivekananda, we remember, was singing devotional songs before him. The Swami then used to visit often the Brahmo Samaj, practise meditation and offer prayers twice daily, once in the morning and once in the evening. He began to sing with devotion and concentration of mind, the song on Brahman viz., “Concentrate your mind on that One stainless. Purusha.” There is one line in that song, “ Worship Him always, strive always to realize Him.” In order to imprint these words in the Swami’s mind the Master said suddenly, “No, no; say rather ‘worship and pray to Him twice a

day'. Why should you repeat in vain what you will not do in practice?" All laughed loudly; the Swami too looked small.

7. The Master taught the Brahmos that God could not be made one's own when one was conscious of His powers

On another occasion the Master said to Kesav and other Brahmos regarding worship, "Why do you describe His powers so much? Does the child sit before his father and think how many houses, how many horses, how many cows, how many gardens, etc., his father has? Or is he simply charmed to think how dear his father is to him, how great his love for him is? The father feeds and clothes the child; what of that? We are, after all, His children. So, what is there to make much of if He does all that? Instead of thinking thus, a real devotee makes Him his own by love; importunes, nay, demands that his prayers be fulfilled, that He may reveal Himself to him. If one thinks so much of His powers, one cannot think that He is one's nearest and dearest and consequently cannot press one's demands on Him. The thought of His greatness creates a distance between Him and the devotee. Think of Him as your very own. It is then only that you will realize Him."

8. "Don't set a limit to the Lord's nature"

Besides learning the absolute necessity of striving hard to realize God and of sacrificing everything for His sake, Kesav and other Brahmos got something else from the Master. They had learnt from the Western missionaries and English books that God could never have form. It was, therefore, according to them a great sin to believe that His Presence could be felt in images having forms and to worship and offer prayers to Him there. The Master's remarks, such as, "Just as formless water gets condensed into ice having a form on account of cold, so formless Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute, condensed on account of devotion, assumes forms"; "Just as a man is reminded of a real custard apple when he sees one made of cork, so, having recourse to an image having form, one attains the immediate knowledge of the real nature of God", made an impression on

their minds and they came to realize that there was much to say and think about what they had called “idolatry” and so long considered unreasonable and contemptible. Moreover, there is little doubt that they viewed the worship of God with forms in a new light on the day the Master proved to Kesav and other Brahmos that Brahman and the great universe, which was the manifestation of Its power, were non-different, like fire and its burning power. They understood clearly on that occasion that it was but a partial description of the real nature of Brahman when they spoke of It as being without form but with attributes. They were convinced that the error that is made when God is described as having forms only, is equally committed when He is described as having attributes only and no forms, for, as manifested, He is the universe having forms; as formless Brahman with attributes, He is the controller of the universe; and as One beyond all attributes, He is the eternal substratum of the manifestation, underlying all names and forms, all persons and things such as God, Jiva and the universe. Kesav and others were astonished that day to find such deep meaning in the ordinary saying of the Master, “One should not fix a limit to the nature of God—He is with forms, He is without forms (and with attributes). Who can know and say what else He is besides?”

During a little more than three years since Kesav met the Master for the first time in 1875, the Brahmo Samaj of India under his able leadership was increasingly disabused of its former infatuation for Western ideas and ideals and assumed a new form, and their love for spiritual practices attracted the attention of the general public. Afterwards, on March 6, 1878, Kesav gave away his daughter in marriage to the prince of Coochbihar. As the age of his daughter was a little less than what had been fixed by the Samaj as the lowest marriageable age for girls, this marriage evoked a good deal of criticism in that society; and carried away by their zeal for social reforms in imitation of the West, the leaders split it in two, calling them the Brahmo Samaj of India and the General Brahmo Samaj. But the influence of the Master on the Brahmo Samaj did not come to an end on account of that event. He went on loving both the parties equally and the seekers after truth in both came to him as before and received spiritual help.

9. Kesav's partial acceptance of the truth discovered by the Master: the foundation and propagation of the New Dispensation

After this schism, Kesav, the leader of the Brahmo Samaj of India, made rapid progress on the path of Sadhana and his spiritual life now became very deep by the grace of the Master. Convinced that the offering of oblations, bathing in consecrated water, shaving the head clean, putting on ochre cloth and other symbolic acts help the human mind to ascend to subtler and higher strata of the Spiritual realm, he more or less adopted them all. Having developed a burning faith in the eternal existence of Gauranga, Jesus and other great souls in luminous spiritual bodies as the living embodiments of different spiritual moods, serving as the perennial springs of inspiration for those moods, he applied himself from time to time to deep meditation on them, so that he might realize properly their spiritual characteristics. Kesav, it is superfluous to say, engaged himself in the practices mentioned above, because he heard that the Master, while he had been practising any particular faith, had put on the emblems peculiar to its followers. With the help of the above-mentioned practices he tried to understand the Master's newly discovered truth, "As many faiths, so many paths", which resulted, within two years of the Coochbihar marriage, in the founding of the New Dispensation, from the pulpit of which he preached the truth, as far as he had grasped it, to the general public. We are unable to express how devoted he was to the Master and how much faith he had in him, as he knew him to be the embodiment of the said New Dispensation. Many of us saw him come to the Master at Dakshineswar and take the dust of his feet uttering again and again the words, "Victory to the Dispensation", "Victory to the Dispensation". Who can say how deep his spiritual life would have become, had he not passed away so soon, just about four years after he had started preaching the New Dispensation?

10. To what extent the Master considered Kesav to be his own

The Master looked upon Kesav as so intimately related to him that, once having heard of his illness, he promised to the Mother of the universe, the votive offering of green coconut and sugar, should Kesav recover. He went to see Kesav during his illness and, finding him very weak, could not

refrain from shedding tears. He said to him, “The gardener sometimes not only prunes the branches of the plant of the Basra rose, but takes out even its roots from under the ground and exposes them to the sun and dew, so that the plant may produce big flowers. The Gardener has brought about this state of your body for that purpose.” Hearing of his passing away at the end of his last illness in 1884, the Master became overwhelmed with grief, did not talk with anyone and lay quiet in his bed for three days. He said afterwards, “When I heard of Kesav’s death, I felt as if one of my limbs got paralysed.” All the men and women of Kesav’s family were greatly devoted to the Master. They sometimes took him to Kamal Kutir[1] and at other times came to him at Dakshineswar in order to listen to spiritual instruction from his holy mouth. To spend a day enjoying the holy conversation of the Master and singing Kirtan with him during the Magha[2] celebrations, came to be regarded as an indispensable item by the Brahmos of the New Dispensation, as long as Kesav lived. Moreover, Kesav used to come with his whole congregation on board a steamer to Dakshineswar now and then and pick up the Master, and then the entire congregation would lose itself in the bliss of Kirtan and holy conversation as the steamer glided leisurely on the Ganga.

11. Vijaykrishna Goswami changed his faith under the influence of the Master and left the Brahmo Samaj

After the separation of the two parties over the Coochbihar marriage, Vijaykrishna Goswami and Sivanath Sastri became the Acharyas of the General Brahmo Samaj. Vijay was very dear to Kesav on account of his truthfulness and love for Sadhana. Vijaykrishna’s eagerness for Sadhana, like that of Acharya Kesav, increased to a great extent after he had had the privilege of meeting the Master. As he was going forward on that path, he attained various new spiritual visions in a short time and acquired faith in the manifestation of God with forms. When Vijay first came to Calcutta for study in the Sanskrit College, before he joined the Brahmo Samaj, his body was adorned with a long tuft of hair on the head, the sacred thread and various kinds of amulets. Vijay gave up all these in one day out of respect for truth and joined the Brahmo Samaj. He boycotted Kesav, who was like

his Guru, out of the same respect for truth after the Coochbihar marriage. Again, out of respect for the same truth he found it impossible to conceal his faith in God having forms and was obliged to separate himself from the Brahmo Samaj. As he lost the means of his livelihood on account of this, he had to undergo much suffering for some time for want of money. But he was not at all depressed. On many occasions Vijay clearly told us that he had received spiritual help from the Master and that sometimes he got his vision in a mysterious way. But we do not know whether he loved and respected him as a subsidiary Guru or in some other manner for we heard from him that in the Akasaganga hill in Gaya, a monk mercifully made him suddenly enter into ecstasy with the help of his Yogic power and became his Guru. But there is no doubt that Vijay had a very high opinion of the Master. We have written elsewhere[1] in this book, what we heard about it from Vijay himself.

12. How far Vijay advanced in Sadhana since then

The spiritual life of Vijay became deeper and deeper as days passed, since he separated himself from the Brahmo Samaj. People were charmed to see his joyous, unrestrained dance and frequent ecstasy under the influence of inspiration during Kirtan. We were told thus by the Master of his high spiritual condition: “Vijay has reached the room just adjacent to the innermost chamber, the acme of spiritual realization and is knocking at its door.” Vijay initiated many people in Mantras after he attained spiritual depth. He passed away at Puri, about fourteen years after the Master had given up his body.

13. The story of the fight of Siva and Rama removed the misunderstanding between Kesav and Vijay

It was observed that after the Coochbihar marriage, a strong ill-feeling arose between the two Brahmo parties, the Samaj of India and the General Samaj. The two parties were not even on speaking terms with each other. But we have mentioned before that persons of both parties having a love for Sadhana used to come to Dakshineswar as usual. One day during this

period, both Kesav and Vijay came to the Master suddenly with the members of their inner circles. Of course, this happened because each party was ignorant of the other party's coming there. A sense of embarrassment was written on the faces of all as they remembered their previous quarrel. Seeing the same sense of embarrassment even in Kesav and Vijay that day, the Master said to them in order to make up their quarrel:

"Look here, once upon a time there arose a quarrel between Siva and Rama and there took place a great fight between them. It is well known that Siva's Guru is Rama and Rama's Guru is Siva. Therefore, it was not long before their quarrel was made up after the fight. But there could never again be a union between the ghosts, the disciples of Siva, and the monkeys, the disciples of Rama. The fight between the ghosts and the monkeys went on for ever. (Then addressing Kesav and Vijay he continued) Whatever was to happen has happened. You should no more have ill-feeling between you; let it remain among the ghosts and monkeys." Kesav and Vijay were after this on speaking terms with each other.

14. Acharya Sivanath abstained from going to Dakshineswar lest the Brahmo Samaj should collapse

When Vijay left the General Brahmo Samaj because of his own direct spiritual experiences, those also who had absolute faith in him, left that Samaj, which consequently was much shorn of its glory. It was Acharya Sivanath Sastri that became the leader of that party then and saved the Samaj. He had, before that time, come several times to the Master and had great love and respect for him. The Master also was very affectionate towards Sivanath. But Sivanath was in a great difficulty after Vijay had left the Samaj. He now stopped visiting the Master thinking that Vijay's religious opinion had been changed under the influence of the Master's instruction and that was why Vijay had left the Samaj. Swami Vivekananda had joined the General Samaj a little before that time and had become a great favourite of Sivanath and other Brahmos. But although he joined the General Samaj, the Swami used from time to time to go to Kesav and the Master at Dakshineswar. The Swami said, "Questioned at that time about the reason why he had discontinued going to the Master, Acharya Sivanath

said, ‘If I go there frequently all the others of the Brahmo Samaj will do so in imitation of me and, as a result, the Samaj will collapse’.” The Swami said further that under that impression Sivanath advised him at that time to abstain from going to Dakshineswar saying, “The Master’s ecstasy etc., are the results of his nervous weakness and his brain has got deranged on account of his undergoing too much physical hardship.” We have mentioned elsewhere[1] what the Master said when he was told about this.

15. Acharya Pratapchandra on the influence of the Master on the Brahmo Samaj

Be that as it may, owing to the influence of the Master, the love for Sadhana entered into the Samaj and all the seekers after truth in both the New Dispensation and the General Samaj tried to mould their lives so as to have the immediate knowledge of God. At one time Pratapchandra Majumdar came to Dakshineswar and shared the company of the Master, when we asked him about the nature and about the degree of the development of the spiritual ideas of the Samaj. He replied, “Did we understand what religion was before we saw him? We merely played the bully. We have understood what a real religious life is after seeing him.” Acharya Chiranjiv Sarma (Trailokya Nath Sannyal) was present there with Pratap on that occasion.

16. The influence of the Master on the General Brahmo Samaj

While the influence of the Master on the New Dispensation was evident, it was by no means negligible on the General Samaj, as long as Vijaykrishna was the Acharya there. But when Vijay and many other seekers after spirituality had left it, the said influence decreased there and it simultaneously lost spirituality and engaged itself in social reforms, patriotic actions, etc. Although there was a definite decrease, the said influence was not altogether absent; the proof of it is found in the practice of Yoga, the study of the Vedanta and the pursuit of spirituality on the part of some members of the General Samaj. Some of them, we have also come to know, follow the Vedic doctrine practised by the higher stratum of the

Kartabhaja community and try to cure physical diseases with the help of meditation etc.

17. The influence of the Master on the Brahmo music

Chiranjiv Sarma, the Acharya of the New Dispensation, has done a great deal towards the development of the Brahmo music. But, it has been found on inquiry that he composed those songs that awaken high thoughts and emotions, when he became acquainted with the various kinds of the Master's visions, ecstasies and Samadhis. We quote below the first lines of a few such songs[1]:

1. Thy formless beauty, O Mother, flashes in dense darkness.
2. The deep sea of Samadhi, endless, boundless.
3. Ah, the full moon of divine Love has risen in the firmament of Consciousness!
4. The waves of the Bliss of divine Love in the waters of the sea of Existence-Bliss.
5. Give me divine inebriations, O Mother.

It is beyond doubt that the fine poet Chiranjiv Sarma has placed all the people of Bengal and all the Sadhakas of the country under a debt of gratitude by composing these songs. There is no doubt, however, that only by seeing the ecstasy of the Master was he able to write these songs: Acharya Chiranjiv had a sweet voice. We saw the Master on many occasions go into ecstasy while he was listening to his music.

18. The Master declared the Brahmo religion a path to the realization of God

Thus the Brahmo Samaj became inspired by the extraordinary spiritual influence of the Master at that time. Although the Master said that the worship of the formless aspect of God preached in the Samaj was that of the unripe type[1], we heard from his mouth now and again, that an aspirant

would succeed in realizing God if he worshipped that aspect of His with a genuine faith. He never forgot to say, “I bow down to the modern knowers of Brahman” and to make salutations to the circle of Brahmos when he bowed down to God and His devotees of all denominations at the end of Kirtans. It is clear from this that he actually believed the Brahmo religion to be one of the world faiths or paths leading to the realization of God, preached according to His will. But he had a great desire and took great pains to see that the circle of Brahmos should free themselves from the Western influence, and firmly follow the true path of spirituality. He told them repeatedly to beware of the danger of making social reforms and philanthropic activities the only aim of human life, however praiseworthy and indispensable they might be in the ordinary social life, and of regarding devotional exercises for God-realization as useless. It was the Brahmo Samaj which discussed the extraordinary spiritual life of the Master and thereby attracted the minds of the general public of Calcutta to Dakshineswar. Every one, who sat at the feet of the Master and was blessed with the attainment of spiritual power and peace, is under an eternal debt in this respect to both the New Dispensation and the General Brahmo Samaj. The present writer, again, owes a greater debt to both of them, for, it was these two societies that placed high ideals before him and helped him in moulding his spiritual life at the beginning of his youth. Filled with reverence and gratefulness we, therefore, bow down again and again to the Samaj, and its three Gems, namely, Brahman, the Brahmo Samaj and the circle of Brahmos, knowing them as one in their real nature. We are going to make a present to the reader of two especial pictures we had the opportunity of witnessing with our own eyes, of the Master’s enjoyment of bliss in the company of the circle of Brahmos.

Footnote

1. The name of Kesav’s house.—Tr.

2. The month of Magha, corresponding to January-February.—Tr.

1. IV. 5.

1. IV. 2.

1. The reader will find the stanzas in the Bengali book of psalms of the New Dispensation.

1. III. 2.

A BRIEF RETROSPECT

1. Ascertaining the period in the Master's life, when he had especial manifestation of the divine mood

The Master, we have said before, brought his Sadhana to a close by performing the worship of Shodasi, the divine Mother, in A.D. 1873. It will not, therefore, be improper to say that from then on he performed all the actions of his life under the impulse of the divine mood. The Master was then thirty-eight years old. So, that mood continued through his life for a little more than twelve[1] years. During this time, all his actions assumed an extraordinary novel character by the will of the universal Mother. Under the impulse of that will, he applied his mind to establish religion among those persons who had a modern Western education. It is therefore clear that at the end of the full twelve years' practice of penances, the Master spent six years in getting acquainted with his own power and the spiritual state of the people in general. Thereafter he was seen engaged with unrivalled energy in the task of re-establishing the eternal religion and arresting the decline of religion that came on India under the strong impulse of Western ideas and ideals which preached that this world was all in all. He retired from this world after bringing to a close the said task. Now we proceed to record, according to our capacity, how he accomplished this divine task.

2. Why we hold the last twelve years of his life to be the period of the especial manifestation of this mood

The reader might think, from what we said before, that the Master remained in the mood of a spiritual aspirant till his thirty-ninth year. It was not so. We tried to explain before in the Third Part of the book that all those who have received the reverence and adoration of the world as Gurus,

prophets or founders of religions, for leading humanity to the realization of spiritual truths, were seen to have manifested those qualities even from their childhood. In the Master's case too we find the expression of these in all the stages of his life, including his childhood. We have seen that under the impulse of these, he did many things during the time of his Sadhana in his youth. And since the completion of his Sadhana at the age of thirty-two, we find him doing almost everything with their help when he went on pilgrimage with Mathur; all his deeds during this time and afterwards were undertaken under the same inspiration. So, the reason why we date the manifestation of his divine mood and his application of himself to the establishment of religion from A.D. 1875 is that since then his divine mood was in one continuous flow and the mission of his life was clearly and definitely undertaken; we find him firmly taking his stand against Western materialism and the culture and civilization based on material science. For, it had entered India and made the men and women of the country assume an outlook on life which was contrary to that of the eternal religion and was daily weaning them from it. So he applied himself whole-heartedly to the introduction of true religion among these English-educated people, so that through his guidance the lives of the people in general might be blessed with the light divine.

3. The Master with the help of the divine mood has freed India from the evil effects of the onrush of Western culture and civilization

It is needless to say that there arose an especial need for doing so. The national character of India and the eternal religion, it seems, would have been completely destroyed, had not, by the will of God, the Master's life, established in the divine mood and possessed of extraordinary spiritual power, stood against it. A little reflection shows us that just as the Master's practice of all religions and his unique achievements therein, leading to the discovery of the grand truth, "As many faiths so many paths", have brought blessings on all peoples of all countries for all time to come, even so, the simple fact of his spending the twelve long years of his ideal divine life, before those who were being carried away by the storm of Western ideas and ideals, served as a beacon light to them and made them return to their

eternal religion, which was thus re-established. The flood-gate was closed and India was saved from a terrible catastrophe. Thus the twin purposes of his life were clearly borne in on us. Firstly, he brought all the extant religions of the world into line with the eternal religion of India and demonstrated that all of them were perfectly true and that they were many and various only because the tastes and tendencies of groups of people were many and various. And secondly, he saved the soul of India, its eternal peace and goodwill, from being caught in the whirlpool of Western materialism based on self-aggrandizement and breakneck-competition. Western education was introduced into India in 1836 and the Master was born in that very year. One, therefore, is simply astonished to see the simultaneous birth by the dispensation of Providence, of the two movements, namely, the blast of the Western system of education, which was designed to sweep India from off her culture and civilization and the counterblast by which the evils of that system would be rendered innocuous, leaving free and clear the atmosphere in which the merits of the new system might be detached and then incorporated with India's own distinctive culture, much to her advantage.

4. When does the divine mood come into play in human life?

The fullest realization of the divine mood, the finale of the spiritual drama, is very rarely seen in human life. When the Jiva, tightly bound by the fetters of his actions, gets liberated by the grace of God, he gets but a faint taste of this mood. For, when the control of the internal and external senses of a man becomes as easy and natural as his breathing; when, losing its identity in the love of the supreme Self, his little I-consciousness merges for ever in the indivisible ocean of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute; when, melted in the Nirvikalpa Samadhi, his mind and intellect get rid of all kinds of dross and assume Sattvika forms; and when the series of desires in his mind, scorched to ashes by the fire of the divine knowledge, can no longer give rise to new impressions and fruits of actions—it is then and then only that the sweet play of the divine mood starts in him and his life is blessed beyond measure. It is very rarely that one has the opportunity of meeting a person blessed with the full manifestation of the divine mood and

enjoying an unbreakable peace and contentment. Moreover, the actions of such a man, not proceeding from any sense of want, and hence appearing to be purposeless, remain for ever incomprehensible to ordinary minds and intellects. Therefore it is, that none but a man who is himself established in the divine mood can really understand the true nature of the said mood. It is never possible for minds and intellects like ours to comprehend the slightest significance of those extraordinary actions that are performed under the influence of that mood, unless and until we approach them with profound faith and reverence.

5. The uncommon manifestation of this mood in divine incarnations makes their character so inscrutable and mysterious

The full manifestation of the divine mood is seen in divine incarnations only. The religious history of the world bears witness to it. This is why the character of an incarnation seems to us to be mysterious for ever. It is possible to paint a partial picture with the help of imagination of the state of the knowledge of Brahman beyond Maya. But it is beyond our power to understand even a little of the ends and purposes of the deeds and actions of the persons who ever dwell easily and naturally in that mood or explain why they are sometimes seen labouring as hard as limited beings like ourselves adopting definite means to definite ends, and why at other times, like gods possessed of boundless powers, they do wonderful things miraculously. The why of this remains a mystery. When we foolishly try to fathom their mysterious doings, our imagination is stupefied, not to speak of our reason. It is therefore superfluous to add that it is not possible to set forth the actions of Sri Ramakrishna's life at this time in a manner satisfactory to normal reason. We shall, therefore, narrate as far as possible only his acts of this time and the conclusions we drew as to their purposes, long afterwards, when the acts bore fruits. We generally base our estimate of a cause on that of its effects. As the effect is great, so must its cause also be great. So, when we ponder over the extraordinary nature of his acts of this period, we cannot fail to be convinced of the extraordinary play and manifestation of the divine mood in and through his body and mind.

6. The seven main divisions of the Master's acts performed under the influence of this mood

Although all the acts of Sri Ramakrishna who was then ever abiding in the divine mood, were performed for the sole purpose of establishing religion, yet they can be definitely classed into seven broad divisions: Firstly moulding in an extraordinary way the religious life of his immaculate, virtuous wife, he converted her into a great power-house of spirituality. Secondly, he met all those who followed higher ideals in their lives and were regarded at that time as leaders in religion in the great city of Calcutta, and tried to make their religious lives perfect with the aid of his spiritual power in all respects. Thirdly, he quenched the spiritual thirst of all people of all communities, who came to Dakshineswar during this time. Fourthly, when he saw the especially marked aspirants after spirituality, about whom he had had previous visions, coming to him, he classified them according to their capabilities and applied himself to the moulding of their religious lives. Fifthly, he initiated some of them into the vow of renouncing their all for the realization of God, and thus founded a brotherhood for propagating his own novel and liberal doctrines to the world. Sixthly, he came again and again to the houses of his own devotees living in Calcutta and awakened the religious spirit in the lives of their families and their neighbours, with the help of holy conversation, Kirtan etc. And seventhly, he bound his own devotees fast with the tie of an extraordinary love and brought about such a wonderful cordial relation among them that all of them became extremely attached to one another and came to possess one soul, as it were, so that they were gradually and naturally converted into a liberal religious body.

We have told the reader, in the last portion of the Second Part, how the Master took up the first of the abovementioned seven kinds of actions in 1874. We have also discussed, in the Appendix to that Part, how he took up the second kind of activity when he went to see Acharya Kesavachandra, the leader of the Brahmo Samaj of India in 1875. Again, we have given the reader a little indication of the third, fourth, and sixth classes of his actions in Chapters, V, VI and VII of the Fourth Part. We, therefore, propose to study here how and when he took up the remaining ones.

Footnote

1. The Master passed away in the fifty-first year of his life.

CHAPTER I—SECTION 2
THE BRAHMO FESTIVAL IN MANIMOHAN MALLICK'S HOUSE

1. Ascertaining the date of the event

It was, we clearly remember, the season of Hemanta.[1] Delighted with her bath in the rains and putting on the *toilette* of autumn, Nature, which had been previously scorched by the summer heat, just started feeling the first touch of the cold season and drew her flowing garments a little closer to her tender, cool body. The Hemanta was almost over. We are describing the event of a day of this period. The date of the event we are going to describe here has fortunately been ascertained in the following way. An esteemed friend of ours, a great devotee[2] of the Master, was present at the scene of the occurrence on that occasion and marked the day, as was his habit, on the margin of the almanac with a few words mentioning the fact. We have come to know from this that the event took place on Monday, November 26, 1883.

2. Our acquaintance with Vaikunthanath Sannyal

We were then studying in the St. Xavier's college, Calcutta, and had had the privilege of meeting the Master only twice or thrice. As the college was closed on that day, we[3] settled that we should go to the Master in the evening. When we were going by boat to Dakshineswar, we remember, we were told that, like us, another passenger was going to the Master. Talking with him, we came to know that his name was Vaikunthanath Sannyal and that he also had met the Master only recently. We remember also that when a passenger in the boat heard the name of the Master from us and used

words of ridicule regarding him, Vaikunthanath's scornful retort silenced the man. It was about two or half past two in the afternoon when we reached our destination.

As soon as we entered the Master's room and bowed down at his feet, he said, "Ah, you have come today! We could not have met you, had you come a little later. I am going to Calcutta today; a carriage has been sent for. There is a festival there, a festival of the Brahmos. It is, however, good that we have met. Please sit down. What a disappointment it would have been had you had to return without meeting me!"

3. We became acquainted with Baburam for the first time

We sat on a mat spread on the floor of the room and asked the Master afterwards, "Shall we be admitted where you are going?" The Master said, "Why not? You can freely go there if you like. It is the house of Mani Mallick of Sinduriapati." Seeing a young man, not very slender, fair and wearing a red cloth, entering the room, the Master said, "Hallo! Please tell them the number of Mani Mallick's house." The young man humbly said, "81, Chitpore Road, Sinduriapati." Seeing the gentle behaviour and the calm nature of the young man, we thought he might be the son of a Brahmin officer of the temple. But when, a couple of months afterwards, we saw him coming out of the university examination hall, we talked with him and found that our impression was totally wrong. We then came to know that his name was Baburam and his home was in the village of Antpur, near Tarakeswar. He was living in a rented house at Combuliatola, Calcutta, and went and stayed with the Master now and then. It is needless to say that he is now well known as Swami Premananda of the Sri Ramakrishna Order.

The carriage arrived in a short time. Asking Baburam to take his towel, clothes, the small bag of spices, etc., and bowing down to the Mother, the Master entered the carriage. Baburam took those things and sat on the other side of the carriage. That day another person also went with the Master to Calcutta. On inquiry we found that his name was Pratapchandra Hazra.

Fortunately a passenger boat was available as soon as the Master had left. We took the boat and alighted at Barabazar in Calcutta. Thinking that the festival would take place at sunset, we waited in the house of a friend.

Vaikunthanath, our new acquaintance, went somewhere else on business assuring us that he would meet us at the proper time at the place of the festival.

We found out Mani Babu's house and it was about four when we reached there. When we inquired about the Master, a man showed us the way to the parlour upstairs. Reaching there, we found that the room was beautifully decorated with leaves and flowers for the festival and a few devotees were talking with one another. On inquiry, we were told that the midday prayer, music, etc., were finished and prayer, Kirtan, etc., would take place again in the evening. The Master had been taken into the inner apartment at the request of the lady devotees.

4. The extraordinary Sankirtan in Mani Mallick's house

When we came to know that it would be some time before the prayer would begin, we went out. Afterwards, at dusk we came back to the place. Scarcely had we reached the road in front of the house when sweet music and the loud sounds of Mridanga greeted our ears. Knowing that the Kirtan had begun, we hastened to the parlour. But what we saw there beggars description. There were crowds of people inside and outside the hall. So many people stood before every door and on the western roof that it was absolutely impossible to push through the crowd into the room. All were craning their necks and looking into the hall with calm eyes full of devotion. They were not at all conscious as to who was or was not beside them. Knowing that it was impossible to enter the room through the front door, we went round, crossed the western roof and were near a northern door of the parlour. As the crowd here was somewhat thin, we thrust our heads somehow into the room and saw:

5. The extraordinary dance of the Master

A wonderful scene! High waves of heavenly bliss were surging there in strong currents. All were lost altogether in the surge of the Kirtan, and laughed, wept and danced, and unable to control themselves, many were falling now and then violently on the ground. Swirled by emotion they

behaved like a troop of lunatics. The Master was dancing in the centre of that God-intoxicated assemblage, now going forward with rapid steps, now going backward in a similar way to the cadence of the music. Wherever he was thus going forward in any direction, the people there, as if enchanted, made room for his free movement. An extraordinary divine light was playing on his smiling face all the while. A wonderful blending of extraordinary tenderness, sweetness and leonine strength was visible in every limb of the Master's body, That superb dance! In it there was no ostentation, no jumping or hopping; no unnatural gestures of the limbs, no acrobatics; nor was there to be noticed any absence of control. There were in it, the natural posture and the movement of each limb as a gushing overflow of grace, bliss and sweetness surging from within, the like of which may be noticed in a large fish, long confined in a mud puddle, when it is suddenly let loose in a vast sheet of water—swimming in all directions, now slowly, now rapidly, and expressing its joy in diverse ways. It appeared as if the dance was the dynamic bodily expression of the surge of Bliss, the Reality of Brahman, he was experiencing within. Thus dancing, sometimes he lost his normal consciousness, sometimes his cloth would slip, which others would fasten firmly round his waist. Again, sometimes seeing someone losing normal consciousness on account of the infusion of spiritual emotions, he touched his breast and brought him back to consciousness. It seemed that descending on him, a divine bright stream of Bliss was spreading on all sides and enabling true devotees to see God face to face. It enabled those of lukewarm disposition to intensify their fervour, idle minds to go forward with enthusiasm to the realm of spirituality, and those extremely attached to the world to become fully free from that attachment for the time being. The surge of his divine emotion caught others and overpowered them. And, illumined by his purity, their minds ascended to an unknown high spiritual level. That Vijaykrishna Goswami, the Acharya of the General Brahmo Samaj, went now and then into a trance and lost consciousness needs no mention; many other Brahmo devotees also were in the same condition. Besides, the sweet-voiced Chiranjiv Sarma, as he was singing to the accompaniment of a one-stringed musical instrument the song, "Dance, O children of the Blissful Mother, round and round", became absorbed in the idea and lost himself in the Self. When a period of more than two hours was thus spent in enjoying the bliss of Kirtan, the song,

"Who has brought down to the world the name of Hari, so sweet?[1]" was sung and the waves of emotions, produced by that extraordinary Kirtan gradually subsided, and then salutations were made to all the teachers of devotion and religious communities.

When all sat down at the end of the Kirtan, the Master, we remember, requested Acharya Nagendra Nath Chattopadhyaya to sing, "Drink the wine of the name of Hari, the essence of all beings, O my mind, and be inebriated", and he complied at once. Filled with fervour, he sang it sweetly, repeating it twice or thrice, which again gladdened the hearts of all.

Afterwards the Master began giving various instructions to all present in the course of the exposition of the theme that the Jiva would surely attain supreme Peace, if he could but withdraw his mind from sights, tastes and other worldly objects and offer it to the Lord. The women devotees also, who were sitting in the eastern part of the parlour behind the screen, put various questions to him on spiritual matters and enjoyed the illuminating replies. Thus, while the Master was engaged in solving the problems, he burst into singing a few songs in praise of the divine Mother composed by Ramprasad, Kamalakanta and other devout Sadhakas, to create a deep impression about that subject on the minds of all present. Of all the songs he sang, we distinctly remember the following five:

1. The black bee of my mind is fully engrossed in sucking the honey of the blue-lotus of Shyama's feet.
2. The kite of my mind was flying high in the sky of Shyama's feet.
3. All this is the play of the mad woman. (The Mother of the universe).
4. What is the fault of the poor mind; why do you falsely hold him guilty?
5. I grieve, O Mother, only because theft was committed in my house while I was wide awake, and Thou Mother, wert keeping watch over me.

6. The Master cut jokes with Vijay Goswami

While the Master was thus singing the Mother's name, Vijay went to another room with a few devotees and engaged himself in reading out and explaining to them the *Ramayana* by Tulsidas. Seeing that the time for the evening prayer was nearing he came back to the parlour to bow down to the Master before he began the prayer. As soon as he saw Vijay, the Master said jokingly, "Vijay feels great delight in Sankirtan nowadays. But I am seized with fear when he dances, for, the whole roof may crash. (All laughed.) Yes, such an event actually took place in our part of the country. People build second storeys of houses there with wood and mud only. A Goswami went to the house of one of his disciples and began singing Kirtan on the first floor. A soon as the atmosphere was created and the Kirtan became quite enjoyable, dancing began. Now, the Goswami was a little fat like you (looking towards Vijay). After he had danced for some time the roof gave way, and the Goswami descended plump to the ground floor! That is why I am afraid that your dancing might produce such an effect." (All laughed.) Seeing that Vijay had put ochre cloth, the Master now said, "He has nowadays become a great lover of the ochre colour also. People dye in ochre their lower and upper garments only, but Vijay has coloured his cloth, wrapper, shirt, including even the pair of his canvas shoes. That is good; a state comes when one wishes to do so; one does not then like to put on any dress that is not ochre-coloured. Ochre is indeed the mark of renunciation; it, therefore, reminds the aspirant that he has undertaken the vow of renouncing everything for the realization of God." Vijay now bowed down to the Master and the Master blessed him with a gracious mind, saying, "Peace, perfect peace be on you."

7. The Master's love for his devotees

When the Master was singing the Mother's name, another event happened, which clearly proved how keen his power of observing outward things was, even though he always remained in a state of inwardness. When he was singing, he happened to look at Baburam's face and knew that he was feeling very hungry and thirsty. As he knew that he would not take anything before he himself had partaken of it, he had some sweets and a glass of water brought, saying that he wanted to take them. He himself took

a particle of the sweets and gave the greater part to Baburam and the rest to the devotees present who took it as Prasada.

Some time after, Vijay bowed down to the Master and came downstairs for the evening prayer, when the Master was taken to the inner apartment for his evening meal. By then it was past nine. In the meantime we came downstairs to join Vijay's prayer. We saw that the Brahmo devotees had assembled in the courtyard for prayer and Acharya Vijay was seated at the altar in the verandah to the north. The entire congregation, following the Acharya, was singing in chorus the Vedic passage, "Brahman is Truth, Knowledge, Infinity" in remembrance of the glory of Brahman, preliminary to starting the prayer. The prayer now commenced and went on for some time when the Master came to the place and taking his seat along with others, joined the prayer. He sat quiet for about ten or fifteen minutes when he bowed down on the ground. Seeing that it was past ten then, he asked that a carriage should be sent for, as he would return to Dakshineswar. He then put on his shirt, stockings, and cap covering the ears, lest he should catch cold, walked out of the place of the meeting with a slow step accompanied by Baburam and others and got into the carriage. Acharya Vijay was addressing the circle of the Brahmos from the altar at this time and giving the usual instruction to them, when we also left the meeting and started home.

8. Mani Mallick's was a family of devotees

On that occasion, we learnt how the Master enjoyed bliss in the company of the Brahmo devotees. We do not know whether Mani Babu was a fully initiated Brahmo. But we know perfectly well that all his family, men as well as women, were then followers of the Brahmo religion and offered daily prayers etc., according to the prescribed order of that Samaj. There was a lady of this family who could not concentrate her mind during her prayers—knowing which, the Master asked her affectionately, "Please tell me, whom you happen to remember at that time." Coming to know that the lady was bringing up her brother's child and her mind always remembered him during the prayer, the Master advised her to serve that child as the very form of the boy Krishna. Putting this instruction into practice, the lady

attained Bhavasamadhi in a short time. We have mentioned this elsewhere.[1] We saw the Master on another occasion, enjoying divine bliss in the company of a few Brahmo devotees in another place. This will form the subject matter of the next Section.

Footnote

1. From the middle of October to the middle of December.—Tr.

2. Balaram Basu of Baghbazar.

3. Varada Sundar Pal of Comilla and Hari Prasanna Chattopadhyaya (Swami Vijnanananda) of Belgharia in the district of 24 Paraganas.

1. We give below the song as far as we remember it.

Who has brought down the name of Hari so sweet,
Nitai or Gaur or Advaita of Santipur has brought it?

Drink the wine of the name of Hari, the essence of all beings, O my mind, and be inebriated. (Once) roll on the ground and weep repeatedly uttering Hari (saying “please find a refuge for me”). Fill the sky with the name of Hari loudly. Raise both your arms and dance uttering Hari, again and again, and distribute gratis the name of Hari (going from door to door). Allow yourselves to be pleasantly carried away, day after day, by the bliss of Hari’s love. Sing the name of Hari, soar to the acme of your life and (intoxicated with the Bliss of God’s love) destroy all mean desires.

CHAPTER I—SECTION 3
THE MASTER IN JAYAGOPAL SEN'S HOUSE

It was not only we who were beside ourselves with joy and saw wonderful new light in the spiritual world when we observed the Master's ecstasy and his enjoyment of bliss during the Kirtan in the house of Manimohan of Sinduriapati, but our esteemed friend Varada Sundar felt similarly and kept on inquiring when and where the Master would come again to confer that kind of bliss. It was not long before his efforts were successful; for, two days later, on Wednesday morning, November 28, as soon as we met him he blurted out, "Sri Ramakrishna will come to Kamal Kutir to see Kesav Babu this afternoon and go to Jayagopal Sen's house at the Mathaghasa quarter later at dusk. Will you go to see him?" It was known to us that Kesav was then very ill. Therefore, thinking that the presence at Kamal Kutir of strangers like us might possibly be a cause of annoyance, we decided to go at dusk to Jayagopal's house to see the Master.

1. Jayagopal Sen's house

We took Mathaghasa to be a part of Barabazar and went there first; then enquiring of people and pressing on and on, we reached Jayagopal's house at last when the sun had already gone down. That day, as on the previous occasion at Manimohan's house, there was a shower of rain in the afternoon. For, we remember distinctly that we made our way through mud on the road and reached our destination. Jayagopal Babu's house, like that of Manimohan, was facing west and we remember to have entered the house turning eastward. As we passed the gate we saw a person and asked him if the Master had come. He received us cordially and asked us to proceed to the first floor by the southern flight of steps and enter the spacious parlour to the east extending north and south. Entering that hall we

saw that it was neat and clean and well furnished: there was on the floor a large mattress covered with a white cotton sheet serving as the common seat for all and the Master was sitting on one part of it surrounded by a few Brahmo devotees. We remember that the two Acharyas of the New Dispensation, Chiranjiv Sarma and Amritalal Basu were among them. Besides Jayagopal, the owner of the house, his brother, two or three friends of his living hard by, and one or two devotees of the Master who came with him, were present there. We remember also to have seen there the young devotee named the junior Gopal whom the Master used to call Hutko.[1] Thus seeing only about a dozen men with the Master on that occasion, we felt that that day's gathering was not meant for the public and to come there as we had done was not quite right for us. We therefore decided that we steal away from that place a little before all were called to take their food.

As soon as we entered the house, we bowed down at the holy feet of the Master. "How have you come here?" asked he. We replied, "We had news that you would come here today; so we have come to see you." It seemed that he was pleased with that answer and asked us to sit down. We sat down and, freed from anxiety, noticed others and listened to his illuminating talk.

2. The Master's method of teaching

Although we had had the good fortune of meeting the Master for the first time only very recently, we had felt an extraordinary attraction for his ambrosial words from the very first day of our meeting. Of course, we did not then understand the reason for it; we find now how unique the method of his teaching was. In it there was no parade of scholarship, logic-chopping, nor festooning of fine phrases; neither was there in it any attempt to cause a small idea look big with turgid words; nor, as with the writers of philosophical aphorisms, an effort to express the deepest thoughts in the fewest possible words making them unintelligible. We cannot say whether the Master, who was the living embodiment of the ideas he expressed, paid any attention at all to the language he used. But, whoever have heard him speak even once have noticed how he held before them picture after picture drawn from the materials of daily occurrence, from the things and events the audience were familiar with, in order to imprint these ideas on their

minds. The listeners also became fully freed from doubts and perfectly satisfied with the truth of his words, as if they saw them enacted before their very eyes. Going on to inquire how those pictures came immediately to his mind, we consider as the cause his extraordinary memory, his wonderful comprehension, his keen power of observation or his uncommon presence of mind. But the Master always said that the divine Mother's grace was the only cause of it. He used to say, "Mother sits in the heart of him who depends entirely on Her and makes him say whatever he has to say by showing it to him through unmistakable signs. Mother always keeps his mind filled with a mass of knowledge which She continues supplying from Her never-failing store of wisdom, whenever it appears to run short. Thus it is that it never gets exhausted however much he may spend from it." Going to explain this fact one day he mentioned the following event:

"There is a Government magazine to the north of the Kali temple at Dakshineswar. Some Sikh soldiers lived there for keeping watch over it. All of them were very much devoted to the Master and sometimes they would take him to their lodgings and have various religious doubts cleared by him. The Master said, "One day they put the question, 'How should a man live in the world so that he may realize God?' And what I immediately saw was a picture of a husking machine before my eyes. Paddy was being husked and one person was very carefully pushing the paddy into the hole where the husking pedal was falling. As soon as I saw it I knew that Mother was explaining to me that one should live in the world as cautiously as that. Just as the person who sits near the hole and pushes up the paddy is always careful that the pedal does not fall on his hand, so, a man engaged in worldly activities should always beware that he does not get entangled in them, being conscious that the worldly affairs were not his. It is only then that he can escape bondage without being hurt and destroyed. As soon as I saw the picture of the husking machine, Mother produced this idea in my mind and it was this that I told them. They also became highly pleased to hear it. Such pictures come before me when I talk to people."

3. Another peculiar characteristic of his method of teaching

Another peculiar characteristic that was observed in the Master's method of teaching was that he never confused the mind of his hearer by speaking unnecessary words. He discerned aright the subject and the aim of the inquirer's question and answered it in a few homely sentences, giving the conclusion and by way of illustrations drawing pictures before him in the aforesaid manner. We call this the especial characteristic of his method of teaching "the statement of the conclusion"; for, he used to state as answer only that which he knew as true in his heart of hearts. He would not say in so many words that no other solution of that problem was possible. Nevertheless that impression would be firmly created in the mind of the hearer, because of his deep-seated conviction and the stress he used to lay on the expressions. If, on account of past education and impressions, any hearer brought forward contrary reasons and arguments and would not accept his conclusions, which he knew by Sadhana as true, he would wind up the topic saying, "I have said whatever came to my mind; take as much or as little of it as you like (or, literally translated, accept it minus the head and tail)." Thus he would never harm or destory the spiritual attitude of the hearer by interfering with his liberty. Did he think that the hearer could not accept the true solution of the subject under discussion, till he had reached a higher mental state by the will of God? It seems so.

Again, he did not stop there but reinforced his talk interspersed with songs composed by well-known Sadhakas and sometimes quoted examples from the scriptures. That used to remove the doubts of the enquirer who, firmly convinced of the truth of the solution, would readily engage himself in guiding his life accordingly.

4. The Master's annoyance at the flow of words not backed by realization

It is necessary to say one word more here. The Master told us again and again that the aspirant arrives at the non-dual knowledge by realizing his identity with the object of his worship at his journey's end, whether he treads the path of devotion or of knowledge. As proofs of this may be quoted his sayings, such as, "Pure devotion and pure knowledge are the same (thing)", "There (in the ultimate state) all jackals howl alike (all men

of knowledge speak of the same realization)", and so on. Thus although he was of the opinion that Advaita knowledge was the ultimate truth, he always taught the general public, with its hankering for worldly objects, the truth of qualified monism, and not unoften, of the love of God after the manner of a dualist. He used to be greatly annoyed at persons who, having no high spiritual experience, nor even love for God, would, nevertheless, bandy arguments in favour of non-dualism or qualified non-dualism. He did not hesitate often to condemn such actions of theirs with very harsh words. One day, the Master asked our friend, Vaikunthanath Sannyal, whether he had read the *Panchadasi* and some such books. Getting a negative reply, the Master said with a sense of relief, "Good that you have not. Some boys read those books and, giving themselves airs, come here; they will not practise anything; they simply come to argue. That is a torment to me."

The reason that led us to quote the aforesaid words is that, at the house of Jayagopal, that day, a certain person put the question to the Master, "How should we live in the world to receive the grace of God?" The Master taught him the doctrine of qualified monism, punctuating the topic with a few songs on the universal Mother. We give below the substance of what he said:

5. The Master taught how to realize God in worldly life

As long as man looks upon the world as "mine" and acts accordingly, he becomes entangled in it, though he knows it to be transitory. He meets with suffering and can find no way out, even if he wants to flee from it. Saying that, the Master immediately sang, "So great is the Maya of Mahamaya that it has kept the whole world under a great delusion; even Brahma and Vishnu are under that delusion, let alone the Jiva not knowing it as such!" and so on. One, therefore, should associate this transitory world mentally with the divine Lord and perform every action accordingly. One must hold fast His Lotus feet with one hand and go on working with the other and always remember that the persons and things of the world are His, not one's own. If one can do that, he will not have to suffer from worldly attachment. There will then arise the idea that whatever one does is the Lord's, and his mind will go forward towards Him. In order to imprint it firmly in the mind of the

enquirer, the Master sang, “O my mind, you do not know how to till (the soil of life)” and so on. The song finished, he continued, “If one lives his life in the world by having recourse to God in that manner, one will gradually feel that all the persons and things of the world are His parts. The aspirant then will serve his parents as he will the Parents of the universe (Brahman and His Power), see the manifestation of the boy Gopala and of the Mother of the universe in his sons and daughters and, knowing all others to be the parts of Narayana, will behave towards them with respect and devotion. A person who lives in the world in that spiritual mood is an ideal man in the world and the fear of death is rooted out from his mind. Such persons are rare indeed, but not altogether wanting.” Afterwards, pointing out the means to reach that ideal, the Master said, “One should have recourse to one’s discriminating intellect and thereafter perform all actions; one should go away now and again from the noise of the world and, engaging oneself in spiritual practices in a quiet place, should try to realize God.” It is in this manner only that one can bring into practice the said ideal in one’s life.[1] Pointing out the means the Master sang the famous song of Ramprasad, “O mind, come let us go for a walk; you will get for the mere picking up the four fruits[2] under the wish-fulfilling tree, Kali.” Again, when he used the expression “discriminating intellect”, he would explain what was meant by it. He said that, with the help of that intellect the aspirant knows God as the One eternal Substance, underlying the fleeting appearances, the totality of sights, tastes, etc., which is the world, and renounces it. But when he has known God, that very intellect teaches him that the One, who is the Absolute, has, in His play as the many, assumed myriads of forms as the individual things and persons of the universe; and the aspirant is blessed at last with the realization that God is both absolute and relative.

6. The bliss of Sankirtan

Then Acharya Chiranjiv began to sing with the help of his one-stringed instrument, “Make me inebriated, O Mother”, all singing it in chorus after him. When the Kirtan thus began, the Master was in ecstasy and stood up. All the others also then stood round him and began to dance and sing.

Finishing this song, Chiranjiv commenced singing, “Ah, the full moon of divine Love has risen in the firmament of Consciousness!” Dancing for a long time to the accompaniment of the song, they brought to a close that day’s Kirtan by bowing down to God and to His devotees. All of them took the dust of the Master’s feet and sat down. He danced sweetly on this occasion also, but he did not have here that kind of deep ecstasy lasting for a long time, which we saw at Manimohan’s place. The Kirtan over, the Master sat down and said to Chiranjiv, “When I heard that song[1] of yours for the first time, I saw rising such a living, large full moon, ever so big, and would enter into ecstasy as soon as it was sung ever afterwards.”

Jayagopal and Chiranjiv were then talking to each other about Kesav’s illness. The Master, we remember, told some one on that occasion that Rakhal was then unwell. We do not know whether Jayagopal was a formally initiated Brahmo or not; but there is no doubt that he had great respect and reverence for Kesavchandra, the Brahmo leader, and love for the members of the Brahmo circle. Kesav sometimes went to Jayagopal’s garden at Belgharia near Calcutta with his entire party and spent some time in spiritual practices. It was on one such occasion that he met the Master for the first time there, which led to the deepening of spirituality in Kesav’s life, culminating in the blossoming of the flower of the New Dispensation. Jayagopal also entertained great respect for the Master ever since that day. He enjoyed great bliss in religious conversation, sometimes by coming to the Master at Dakshineswar and sometimes by inviting him to his own house. For some time, Jayagopal, we were told, paid a great part of the expenses of the Master’s carriage-hire for going to Calcutta. All the members of his family also had much respect for him.

When, afterwards, we noticed that the night was well advanced, we took leave of the Master for the day and started home.

Footnote

1. Literally, one who comes all on a sudden and disappears similarly.—Tr.

1. We are indebted to ‘M’, the esteemed author of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* for a part of the substance of this day’s conversation.

2. Namely, Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha i.e., moral, economical and aesthetic excellence, as well as liberation.—Tr.

1. Ah, the full moon of divine Love has risen in the firmament of consciousness (Victory to the merciful One).

Behold the sea of the divine Love swollen high; Oh, the bliss of it!

Ah, the devotees like stars, glitter round Hari, the playful One and friend of the devotees.

Opening the door of heaven, the vernal breeze of the New Dispensation blows and raises waves of bliss.

The sweet smell of the nectar of divine Love spreads rapidly around and makes the Yogis inebriated with the bliss of holy contemplation.

In the shoreless sea of the world is dancing the lotus of the Dispensation, on which sits gracefully the blissful Mother.

The bees, the devotees, overwhelmed with spiritual emotions, drink the nectar of that lotus.

Lo! There is the Mother's gracious, world-charming face so pleasing to the devotees' minds. And merged in love, holy men in companies dance and sing at Her feet.

Oh, the beauty of it! Life has become cool and refreshed on seeing all this. Holding the feet of all, Premadas beseeches every one to sing victory to Mother.

CHAPTER II
THE BEGINNING OF THE ARRIVAL OF THE MASTER'S DEVOTEES PREVIOUSLY SEEN IN VISIONS

1. The Master also learnt something from the Brahmo Samaj

We have already told the reader how the Brahmo leaders like Acharya Kesavchandra, Vijaykrishna, Pratapchandra, Sivanath, Chiranjiv, Amritalal, Gauragovinda and others were greatly benefited by coming in contact with the Master and observing in him the glorious ideals of devotion to one's faith and the total renunciation of one's all for the realization of God. Now, the question arises, "Did the Master, already possessing the immediate knowledge of Brahman and established in Bhavamukha, learn anything from his contact with Kesav and other Brahmos?" Many of the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna will not at all hesitate to say "no" to this in reply. But the law of "give and take" is seen always to exist everywhere in the world. Even when we go to teach a very ignorant and fickle boy, we in turn learn many things, such as the mode of teaching best suited to an intellect like his, the degree to which the past impressions of such a mind help or hinder the understanding of the subject, the process of removing the hindrances, and so on and so forth. It is therefore not reasonable to say that the Master learnt nothing when he came in contact with the Brahmo Samaj established on the basis of Western ideas and ideals. Our impression, therefore, is quite different. We say, the Master himself learnt much when he tried to impart to the Brahmo society and church his own knowledge and spiritual experiences obtained through his extraordinary Sadhana. It is therefore proper to discuss a little of the things he learnt as the result of that contact.

2. He came to know how far the influence of the Western ideas and ideals had changed the outlook on life of the people of India

Before he came in contact with the Brahmos, the Master was living his life far from the influence of the Western ideas and ideals. He saw all people, who came to him up to that time, with the exception of Mathuranath, making efforts to guide their lives after the ancient ideals of performing actions that are beneficial to society as well as to themselves or of realizing immortality through total renunciation of all possessions and desires, which was the eternal, immutable ideal of India. Although he saw Mathuranath, educated in the Western manner, possessing a nature different from that of others, he had no opportunity to study and understand that the life of every one of this country, so educated, was thus coloured with an ideal that was contradictory to the ancient one. For, the nature of Mathuranath changed in a short time on account of his holy company. So, there was no occasion for him to study the new situation. Coming in contact with the Brahmos, however, he saw that, although they were making efforts to realize God, they had deviated from the ancient national ideal of renunciation. His mind, therefore, engaged itself in finding out its cause. It was thus that he became acquainted for the first time with the mass of exotic ideas entering into the lives of the people of India because of Western education and training.

3. They would not accept the direct experiences of the seers of India, without comparing them with the teachings of Western scholars

The Master, it seems, thought at first that, when Kesav and other Brahmos became acquainted with the living religious ideas realized directly by him, they would unreservedly accept them in a short time. But days followed one another and he found that, in spite of their coming in close contact with him, they could not get rid of the influence of Western education and place perfect faith in his direct spiritual experiences. So he came to understand that the Western ideas had struck their roots deep into the nature of young Indians, that the thinkers and scholars of the West had come to occupy the place of their Gurus and would continue to occupy it for a long time to come and that without comparing the direct spiritual

experiences of the ancient seers of India with the ideas of those scholars, the Indian disciples of the latter would never accept them as true and beneficial. This was why, immediately after giving instruction to them, the Master used to say, “I have said whatever came to my mind; you accept what portions suit you” or, in his own phraseology, “minus the head and tail”. It is needless to say that whatever ideas and experiences of the Master they accepted, they did so only because he gave them absolute freedom to pick and choose.

4. Knowing that it happened by the will of the Mother, the Master remained un-perturbed

But the Master, the consolidated incarnation of the ideas and ideals of the seers of this country, was not at all disturbed by this attitude of theirs, for he had felt in his heart of hearts that the will of the universal Mother was the only cause of all kinds of events taking place in the world and that no event could ever influence a person who was possessed of Her command and was habituated to guiding himself under all circumstances accordingly. Maya, the divine Power, capable of making the impossible possible, had revealed to him Her own real nature, explained it to him and endowed him for ever with an inviolable, unchangeable Peace. The Master, therefore, could perfectly comprehend that it was only owing to the divine Mother’s will that Western ideas and ideals had entered India and that by Her will alone had the Brahmos and other educated communities become mere toys in their hands. So, how could he be annoyed at that weakness of theirs or withhold from them his infinite love and affection? He, therefore, remained free from anxiety and thought, “Let them accept as much of the immediate knowledge of the seers as is possible for them; the Mother of the universe will bring forward in future such persons as will fully accept that knowledge.”

5. What the Master did when he found the Brahmos unable to accept the knowledge of Brahman in its entirety

Again, although he found that the Brahmos could not accept everything he said, he did not give them a partial picture of his spiritual experiences. He always told them without reserve all the hidden truths of the spiritual world, viz., "The blessed vision of God will never be had unless one renounces one's all for Him", "All the faiths are (true) paths (to the realization of God)", "At the end of each path, the worshipper becomes identified with the worshipped", "To see that one's words agree fully with one's thoughts is the most important Sadhana", "The path leading to Him is to discriminate the real from the unreal, to be free from all desires, and to perform all worldly duties with full faith in and reliance on God", and so on and so forth. He explained to Kesav and some others that it was never possible to be completely unattached to the body and experience higher truths of the spiritual world unless continence was practised with body, mind and speech, as a result of which they made efforts to observe it. When, however, he found that they were unable to grasp his words fully even after repeated explanations, he came to the conclusion that, once the past impressions became deep-rooted, it was almost impossible to make one imbibe new ideas; that the effort was as futile as to teach a parrot to repeat "Radhakrishna" when once the ring of colour had appeared round its neck. He understood that those persons in whom the desire to enjoy the world had taken deep root, whether due to the influence of Western materialism or otherwise, would never be able to accept the eternal ideas of renunciation preached by this country, far less to carry them out into practice. That is why he burst into an earnest prayer, "Bring here, Mother, Your all-renouncing devotees, with whom I am to have the joy of talking about Thee without any reserve." Therefore, it will not be unreasonable for us to say that as a result of this observation the conviction grew in him that it was only the minds of boys, unspoiled by deep-seated impressions, that would fully grasp and accept his ideas and ideals without hesitation and go boldly forward to realize the truths contained in them.

6. The minds of the people of Calcutta were attracted towards the Master through the Brahmos. Ram and Manomohan came and took refuge in the Master

Anyway, it did not take the general public of Calcutta long to observe how far the Brahmo leaders accepted the Master's new spiritual ideas and what changes were brought about in them. Again, when Kesav and other persons began to publish in the Brahmo periodicals some account of the extraordinary nature of his spiritual views and his ambrosial words, the people of Calcutta were much attracted towards him and began to pour in to Dakshineswar to have the blessed privilege of meeting him. It is in this way that the Master's marked devotees came gradually to the Kali temple there. The two householders devotees of the Master, Ramchandra Datta and Manomohan Mitra, we were told, read about him in the periodical conducted by Kesav and came to him at about the end of 1879, about four years after the Master's first meeting with Kesav. Ramchandra Datta has himself told us through some details in his book *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa Deber Jivan Vrittanta,* what a great revolution gradually took place in their lives on account of their good fortune in coming in contact with him. We need not repeat them here. It will be enough to say here that, although unable to accept fully the Master's ideal of the total renunciation of lust and gold for the realization of God, they covered a pretty long distance on the path of renunciation under the influence of their devotion to and faith in him. The intensity of the devotion and faith of a householder devotee can, to a great extent, be ascertained by noticing his unstinted expenditure of hard-earned money in a good cause. Putting the Master at first in the place of his Guru and then in that of his chosen Ideal, Ramchandra invited him and his devotees again and again to his house at the Simla quarter of Calcutta and spent money so unstintedly during festivals on those occasions that one could fathom easily the depth of his faith and devotion. The Master said about him from time to time, "You now see Ram so splendidly generous. But his miserliness when he first came beggars description. I asked him to bring some cardamom, and one day he brought a pice worth of it, placed it before me and bowed down. Guess from it what a great change has come over Ram's nature."

7. A wonderful vision of the Master. Rakhal came

It cannot be expressed in words how blessed Ram and Manomohan felt themselves to be when the Master's grace fell on them; and they were accepted and given eternal refuge at his feet, all fear being dispelled from them for ever. It was beyond their wildest dream that such a refuge could be ever found in the world! So was it a matter of surprise that they should now try to make their relatives and friends seek the same refuge? They brought gradually their own families and other relatives to the Master's lotus feet at Dakshineswar within a year of their meeting with him. It was thus that the all-renouncing devotees, the eternal playmates of the Master in his Lila, began coming to him one by one from the last quarter of B.E. 1287 or A.D. 1881. Of these, Swami Brahmananda, well known in the Order of Sri Ramakrishna, was the first to come to the Master. In his premonastic days, his name was Rakhalchandra. He had married Manomohan's sister and it was from this family that he first heard the name of the Master and came to him shortly after his marriage. Sri Ramakrishna said, "Before Rakhal came, I had seen in a vision that the Mother of the universe suddenly had brought a boy and, placing him on my lap, said, 'He is your son.' I started in terror to hear it and said, 'How is that? How can I have a son? 'She smiled and explained, 'He is not a son in the ordinary, worldly sense of the term, but your all-renouncing spiritual son.' Thus assured, I was consoled. Rakhal came immediately after I had had the vision and I recognized him at once as the boy."

8. The boyish nature of Rakhal

On another occasion, the Master said to us about Sri Rakhal, "In those days Rakhal had the nature of a child of three or four, so to say. He looked upon me exactly as his mother. He would come running at short intervals and joyfully sit on my lap without any hesitation. He would not move a step from here, let alone going home. I was importunate and induced him to go borne now and then lest his father should disallow his coming here. His father was a Zamindar, immensely rich, but equally miserly. He tried at first in various ways to prevent his son from coming. Later when he found that many rich and learned men visited this place, he did not object to his son's

coming here. On some occasions he came here only to meet his son. For the sake of Rakhal, I was all attention to him and he was very pleased.

9. Rakhal's wife

"But never was any objection raised against his coming here by his father-in-law's family. For, Manomohan's mother, wife and sister all used to visit this place very often. One day, shortly after Rakhal had started coming here, Manomohan's mother came with his girl-wife; I was anxious lest his wife should stand in the way of his devotion to God and had her brought to me. I observed her physical features from head to foot minutely and became convinced that here was no cause for fear. Representing the auspicious aspect of the divine Sakti as she did, she would never be an obstacle on the path to her husband's realization of God. Then I was pleased and sent word to the Nahavat (i.e., to the Holy Mother) asking her to present the daughter-in-law a rupee and see her veiled face.[1]

10. How Rakhal would lose his boyishness

"It is impossible to describe what the childlike rapture that overcame Rakhal was like, whenever he was in my company; he simply lost himself. Every one who saw him then was wonder-struck. Inspired with spiritual fervour, I also used to feed him with thickened milk and butter, and played with him to cheer him. On many occasions I lifted him to my shoulders. Even that did not produce an iota of hesitation in his mind. But then and there I said, 'Should he grow up and live in the company of his wife, this childlike nature of his will vanish.'

11. The Master scolded Rakhal

"I also scolded him when he did something wrong. One day he was very hungry and took butter, the Prasada brought from the Kali temple, with his own hand and ate it. I said, 'How greedy! You took with your own hand and ate the butter, instead of controlling greed, which you ought to have learnt from here!' He shrank into himself from fear and never did so again.

12. Jealousy in Rakhal's mind and the Master's misgiving

"Rakhal then had a child's jealousy too. It was quite unbearable for him, if I loved anyone but him. He would feel wounded at heart. At that I felt greatly perturbed lest he should harm himself by being jealous of those whom Mother would bring here.

13. Rakhal went to Vrindavan

"Three years after he came here Rakhal fell ill and went to Vrindavan with Balaram. I had a vision a little before that, as if Mother was going to remove him from here. At this I eagerly prayed, 'Mother, he (Rakhal) is a mere boy, quite ignorant; that is why he sometimes feels piqued. If, for the sake of Thy work, Thou removest him from here for some time, keep him in a good place and in a blissful mood.' He went to Vrindavan shortly afterwards.

14. The Master's apprehension on hearing on Rakhal's illness

"I cannot express how very anxious I was when I was told that Rakhal was ill at Vrindavan. For, Mother had shown me before that Rakhal was in truth a 'cowherd boy'[1] of Vraja. If one goes to the place from where one came to assume a body, one very often remembers one's past life and gives up the body. That was why I was afraid that he might pass away at Vrindavan. So I eagerly prayed to Mother and She comforted me with an assurance. Mother has thus shown me many things about Rakhal. Many of those things I am forbidden to express."[2]

15. The later life of Rakhal

There are no limits to the things said on various occasions by the Master about this first boy-devotee of his. Whatever Mother showed the Master about him has proved true to the letter. He became, classed with the Sadhakas noted for their gravity and serenity as he advanced in age and renounced his all for the realization of God; the boy has now come to

occupy the highest position in the Order of Sri Ramakrishna. Spared till now by the will of the Master, Swami Brahmananda is doing immense good to humanity.[3] Thinking, therefore, that more things about him should not be said now, we stop here.[4]

Swami Vivekananda came to the Master three or four months after Swami Brahmananda had come to Dakshineswar for the first time. We shall now address ourselves to the narration of the incidents connected with his life.

Footnote

1. This is how a mother-in-law in Bengal sees the veiled face of her newly arrived daughter-in-law. First of all she gives some presents, generally money, then, removing the veil gently, she sees her face and kisses her.—Tr.

1. With whom the Lord, in His incarnation as Sri Krishna, had played in His childhood. The word Rakhal means a cowherd.—Tr.

2. Though the Master did not say all the things mentioned above at one and the same time, we have arranged them all here for the sake of convenience.

3. Swami Brahmananda passed away in 1922.—Pub.

4. The author, we are told, wanted to write many things more of Swami Brahmananda; but having been reminded by Swami Premananda of the Master's words of warning that incidents of his past life and some other secrets should not be brought to his mind, he desisted from doing so. Hence many of them are lost to the world.—Tr.

CHAPTER III
NARENDRA'S ANTECEDENTS AND HIS FIRST VISIT TO DAKSHINESWAR

1. A discussion on the mental state of the Master abiding in the divine mood

The Vedas and other scriptures say that a knower of Brahman becomes all-knowing. This saying of the scriptures is proved to be wholly true when we notice the present behaviour of the Master firmly established in the knowledge of Brahman. For not only did he now become directly acquainted with both the Absolute and its relative aspect, with Brahman and Its power Maya and rising far above all doubts and impurities was abiding in a state of everlasting bliss; but, ever feeling his oneness with the universal Mother in Bhavamukha, he could understand any hidden mystery of the realm of Maya any moment he wished to know. Maya could no more conceal Her nature from his mind's eye, possessed of subtle vision. And it was naturally so; for, both Bhavamukha and the universal Mind of Isvara, the Lord of Maya, in which the ideation of the universe remains sometimes manifested and sometimes unmanifested, are one and the same thing; all the ideas arising in the universal Mind appear clearly before one who has crossed the limit of his little I-ness and has become identified with the universal I. The Master could know the events of all the previous births of his devotees before they had come to him, only because he had reached that state. He could know the particular Lila of the universal Mind for the manifestation of which he had assumed his present body. He also knew that some very high class Sadhakas were born by the will of God to participate in that sport. He further understood who among those would help him more or less in the manifestation of that play and who would simply enjoy the

benefit arising out of it and attain the acme of their lives. Knowing that the time of their coming was near at hand, he was waiting for them with great eagerness. How could one be regarded except as an all-knowing one, who lived within the realm of Maya and knew all Her secrets?

2. The Master and Narendranath met for the first time at Surendra's house

When one thinks of the first meeting of Swami Vivekananda with the Master, one comes to understand how eagerly the Master, established in the divine state, waited for his marked devotees, as he saw the time of their arrival drawing near. Swami Brahmananda said that Surendranath Mitra of Simla in Calcutta came to Dakshineswar at almost the same time with him. Surendra was much attracted towards the Master at his very first visit. Drawn closer and closer to him within a short time, he took him home and celebrated a joyous festival. No good singer being available for the occasion, Surendra affectionately invited Narendra, the son of Viswanath Datta, his neighbour, to join the festival and treat the audience, specially the Master, to devotional songs. The first meeting of the Master and Vivekananda, the chief playmate in his divine sport, came to pass that way. It was probably the month of November 1881. Narendra, then eighteen years old, was preparing for the F.A. examination of the Calcutta University.

3. The Master invited Narendranath to come to Dakshineswar

Swami Brahmananda said that they clearly felt that the Master was very much attracted towards Narendra as soon as he saw him that day; for, he first called Surendra and then Ramachandra to him, collected all possible particulars about the youthful singer of sweet voice and asked them to take him once to Dakshineswar. Again, when the singing was over, he himself came to the young man and, studying carefully his physiognomy, spoke a word or two to him and invited him to come soon to Dakshineswar some day.

4. Narendra refused to get married. His first visit to Dakshineswar

The F.A. examination of the Calcutta University was over a few weeks after the said event. At the request of a respectable gentleman of the city, Narendra's father was arranging to give his son in marriage to the former's daughter. As the bride was somewhat dark in complexion, her father agreed to give a dowry of ten thousand rupees.[1] But as Narendra objected strongly, the marriage could not take place. Ramchandra, a close relative of Narendranath's father, had been brought up in their house and was then a physician in Calcutta. When he came to know that Narendra had declined the marriage for the sake of pursuing spiritual enlightenment, he said to him, "If you have a real desire to realize God, then come to the Master at Dakshineswar instead of visiting the Brahmo Samaj and other places." One day at this time, Surendra too invited him to accompany him to Dakshineswar in his carriage. Narendra consented and with two or three friends accompanied Surendra to Dakshineswar.

The Master told us briefly in the course of a conversation what thoughts came to his mind when he saw Narendra on that occasion. He said:

5. What the Master thought of Narendra

"Naren entered this room on the first day through the western door (facing the Ganga). I noticed that he took no care of his body; the hair of his head and his dress were not at all trim; unlike others, he had no desire at all for any external object; he was, as it were, unattached to anything. His eyes indicated that a major part of his mind was perforce drawn ever inward. When I saw all these, I wondered, 'Is it ever possible that such a great spiritual aspirant possessing a superabundance of Sattva, should live in Calcutta, the home of worldly people?'

"There was a mattress spread on the floor; I asked him to sit down. He sat down near the jar of Ganga water. A few acquaintances of his also came with him that day. I felt that their nature was just like that of ordinary worldly people and was quite opposite to his. Their attention was directed to enjoyment only.

"On inquiry, I came to know that he had learnt two or three Bengali songs only. I asked him to sing them. He began singing the Brahmo song, "O mind, come, let us go home."[1] As if in meditation, he sang it with the whole of his mind and heart. When I heard it, I could not control myself and was in ecstasy.

6. The Master's eagerness to see Narendra

"Afterwards, when he left, there was such an eagerness in the heart, all the twenty-four hours of the day, to see him that it cannot be expressed in words. I felt such pain from time to time that it seemed as if some one was wringing my heart like a wet towel. Unable to control myself, I then went running to the Tamarisk trees in the north of the garden, where people do not generally go, and wept loudly saying, 'O my child, come, I cannot do without seeing you.' It was only after weeping a little thus that I could control myself. This happened continually for six months. My mind sometimes felt uneasy for some of the other boys too who came here. But it can be said that that was nothing compared to my feelings in Naren's case."

We came to know afterwards from a reliable source that the Master concealed much of the extraordinary emotions that arose in his mind when he saw Narendra for the first time at Dakshineswar and spoke to us of it with reserve. In the course of conversation regarding that occasion, one day Narendranath said to us:

7. What Narendra said of the Master's talk and behaviour on that occasion

"I finished singing. Immediately afterwards the Master suddenly stood up and taking me by the hand, led me to the northern verandah. It was winter; so to protect the room against the north wind the open spaces between the pillars of the verandah were covered by mat screens. Therefore, when one entered the verandah and closed the door of the room, one could not be seen by any person within or without the room. As soon as he entered the verandah the Master closed the door of the room. I thought he might perhaps give me some instruction in private. But what he said and did was

beyond imagination. He suddenly caught hold of my hand and shed profuse tears of joy. Addressing me affectionately like one already familiar, he said: 'Is it proper that you should come so late? Should you not have once thought how I was waiting for you? Hearing continually the idle talk of worldly people, my ears are about to be scorched. Not having any one to whom to communicate my innermost feelings, I am about to burst.' And so he went on raving and weeping. The next moment he stood before me with folded palms and, showing me the regard due to a god, went on saying, 'I know, my lord, you are that ancient Rishi Nara, a part of Narayana, who has incarnated himself this time, to remove the miseries and sufferings of humanity.'

8. Narendra promised to come again

"I was absolutely nonplussed and thought, "Whom have I come to see? He is, I see, completely insane; why should he otherwise speak in this strain to me who am really the son of Viswanath Datta? However, I kept silent and the wonderful madman went on speaking whatever he liked. The next moment he asked me to wait there and entered the room and bringing some butter, candy and Sandesh, began to feed me with his own hand. He never gave ear to my repeated requests to give me these, so that I might partake of them with my companions, saying, 'They will take them later. You take these yourself.' Saying so he fed me with all the sweets before he could rest content. He then caught hold of my hand and said, 'Promise, you will soon come to me again and all alone.' Unable to evade that earnest request of his I had to say, 'I will' and then I entered the room with him and sat down beside my companions.

9. Narendra's impression of the Master during his first visit: he was a monomaniac but one who had indeed renounced his all for the sake of God

"I went on observing him closely and could find no trace of madness in his deportment, conversation or behaviour towards others. Impressed by his fine talk and ecstasy, I thought that he was truly a man of renunciation who had given up his all for God and practised personally what he Said. 'God

can be Seen and spoken with, just as I am seeing you and speaking with you; but who wants to do so? People grieve and shed potfuls of tears at the death of their wives and sons and behave in the same way for the sake of money or property; but who does so because he cannot realize God? If any one is really equally anxious to see Him and calls on Him, He certainly reveals Himself to him.' When I heard these words of his, the impression grew on me that it was not mere poetry or imagination couched in fine figures of speech that he was expressing like other preachers of religion, but that he was speaking that of which he had an immediate knowledge which he had actually got by really renouncing everything and calling on God with all his mind. Trying to harmonize these words with his behaviour towards me a little while previously, I remembered the examples of the monomaniacs mentioned by Abercrombie and other English philosophers and came to the sure conclusion that he belonged to that class. Although I came to that conclusion, I could not forget the greatness of his wonderful renunciation for God. Speechless, I thought, 'Well, he may be mad, but it is indeed a rare soul alone in the world who could undertake such renunciation. Yes, mad, but how pure! and what renunciation! He is truly worthy of respect, reverence and worship by the human heart.' Thinking thus, I bowed down at his feet, took leave of him and returned to Calcutta that day."

As the reader will naturally have the curiosity to know the antecedents of one the sight of whom roused such extraordinary emotions in the Master's mind, we shall now relate them briefly.

10. Practice of religion at that time by Narendra

Narendra did not then spend his time in the acquisition of knowledge and in learning music only, but engaged himself in observing perfect continence and in practising severe austerity under the impulsion of a religious temper. A strict vegetarian, he spent his nights lying on the bare ground or on a bed consisting of one blanket only. His mother's mother had a rented house near his ancestral one. He generally lived in a room on the first floor over the outer apartment of that house ever since he appeared for the Entrance examination. When it was inconvenient to stay there for some reason or

other, he hired a room near that house, lived separately, away from his relatives and family and engaged himself in accomplishing his object, viz., the realization of God. His large-hearted father and other members of the family thought that he was living separately only because he found it rather inconvenient to study at home on account of various kinds of distractions and disorders arising from too many persons living together there.

11. He used to visit the Brahmo Samaj

Narendra was then frequenting the Brahmo Samaj and becoming a believer in the existence of the formless Brahman with attributes, and began spending much time in meditation on Him. He could not remain satisfied, like other people, by simply becoming convinced of the existence of the formless Brahman with the help of inference and reasoning. Led by the spiritual tendencies of his past lives, his heart was incessantly telling him that if God really exists, He will never keep His own nature concealed from an eagerly seeking human heart, that He certainly had laid down the means to realize Him, and that life will become a burden and a drudgery if it is not a quest for the realization of God. He, we distinctly remember, said to us once:

12. The two wonderful ideas of Narendra

“As soon as I went to bed, two ideas appeared before me every night since I had reached my youth. One vision presented me as a person of endless wealth and property, innumerable servants and dependants, high rank and dignity, great pomp and power, and I thought that I was seated at the head of those who were called big men in the world. I felt I certainly had that power in me. Again, the next moment, I felt as if I had renounced everything of the world and, putting on a loin cloth, eating whatever was available without effort and spending nights under trees and depending on God’s will only, I was leading my life. I felt I could live the life of the Rishis and the Munis if I would. These two pictures, according to which I could mould my life in two different ways, thus arose in my mind. But the latter would grip the mind in the end. I thought that it was in this way alone

that man could attain real bliss and that I would follow this path and not the other. Brooding on the happiness of such a life, my mind would then merge in the contemplation of God and I would fall asleep. It is a matter of astonishment that it happened so every night, for a long time."

13. Narendra's natural inclination for meditation

Even at that young age Narendra found out, without any external aid that meditation was the best method for the realization of God. This bespeaks the greatness of his past impressions. When he was about four or five years old, he used to buy in the market small images of Sita-Rama, Siva and other gods and goddesses, brought them home and adorning them with ornaments of flowers, sat motionless before them with his eyes shut in imitation of meditation and sometimes would look to see if, in the meantime, his matted hair, hanging from his head, had entered the earth like the aerial roots of some trees. For, he had heard from the old ladies of the household that Munis and Rishis sat in meditation for such a long time that their matted hair grew long, came down and entered the earth that way. His revered mother said that one day he entered a secluded part of the house with a boy named Hari, a neighbour, without the knowledge of the household and sat thus for so long a time in imitation of meditation, that the whole household ran about thinking that the boy had wandered away from home and lost his way. Afterwards, seeing that part of the house barred from within, someone broke into it and saw that he was then sitting motionless. His was no doubt a childish imagination, but it clearly shows what wonderful impressions he was born with. Anyway, no one of his relatives knew that he used to practise meditation every day at the time we are speaking of. For, he barred his room and sat for meditation after all the household had gone to bed. He would sometimes be so much absorbed in it that the whole night would pass away before he came back to normal consciousness.

14. The growth of that inclination on the advice of Maharshi Devendranath

Narendra's tendency to meditate was greatly enhanced on account of an event that took place about this time. One day he went with his friends to see the revered Acharya Maharshi Devendranath of the Adi Brahmo Samaj. On that occasion the Maharshi lovingly made the young men sit near him, gave much good instruction and requested them to practise meditation on God every day. Addressing Narendra he said that day, "The characteristics of a Yogi are manifested in you; if you practise meditation, you will soon experience the results recorded in the Yoga scriptures." Narendra had reverence for the Maharshi even before for his pure character. Therefore, there is no doubt, that, on his advice, he applied his mind to the practice of meditation with greater zeal than before.

15. The many-sided genius of Narendra

The signs of a many-sided genius were perceptible in Narendra from his childhood. He got by heart all the aphorisms of the Sanskrit grammar book named Mugdhabodha. Placing him on his lap every evening, an old relative of his taught him the names of his forefathers, hymns to gods and goddesses and the aphorisms of the said grammar. At the age of six he was able to learn by heart the whole of the *Ramayana* done to music. If it was sung anywhere in that quarter, he was sure to be present there. One day at a certain place near by, a singer of that epic, while singing a part of the musical composition, could not recall a certain passage; Narendra immediately repeated that portion for him and got a kind reception and some sweets from him. At that time while he was listening to the reading of the *Ramayana,* Narendra looked round to see whether according to Hanuman's promise, he, the great hero and servant of Ramachandra, was present. His strong memory was manifest like that of a Srutidhara—he retained whatever he had heard but once; and once set in his memory, it was there ever afterwards. This was why his method of learning his lessons from his childhood was not like that of other boys. When he was admitted into the school, a tutor was engaged for him to help him in learning his daily lessons. Narendra said, "When he came to our house, I brought my English and Bengali books to him and showing to him which books and which parts of them were to be learnt that day, I lay or sat freely. The teacher repeated

twice or thrice the spelling, pronunciation, meaning, etc., of the words of those portions of the books as if he was himself learning his own lesson and went away. That was sufficient for me to learn them." When he grew up, he would begin to master the text books only two or three months before the examination. At other times he spent his time in reading other books of his choice. Thus, before appearing for the Entrance examination, he had read practically all the important books in English and Bengali literature and many books on history. But, as a result of adopting this method he sometimes had to labour hard immediately before his examinations. One day he said to us in connection with what we have narrated before, "I found just two or three days before the Entrance examination that the pages of Euclid had not been turned over at all. I then sat up the whole night to study it; I mastered all the four books on the subject in twenty-four hours and appeared at the examination." It is needless to say that he could do so only because he had a robust body and an extraordinary memory by the will of God.

16. Narendra's inclination for study

When it is said that Narendra spent his time in reading books other than his text books, let no one think that he read novels and plays only and wasted his time. At certain particular times a great inclination to study books on particular subjects arose in his mind. He then mastered all the books he could collect on that subject. For example, in 1879, the year of his Entrance examination, he felt an urge for reading the important available books on Indian history and read Marshman, Elphin-stone, etc. During his study for the F.A. examination, he mastered one by one all the available books on Logic in English, such as those by Whitley, Jevons, Mill; and when he was reading for the B.A. examination he had a great desire to study the histories of England and other European countries both ancient and modern, and books of Western philosophy. Similar was his passion for other branches of learning.

17. Narendra's capacity for quick reading

As a result of reading of a vast number of books, Narendra's power of rapid reading was developed to an extraordinary degree from the time of his appearing for the Entrance examination. He said, "Since then, when I took up a book, I did not find it necessary to plod through it line by line in order to understand the author. I could grasp the point by reading the first and the last lines of a paragraph. Gradually that power became developed and it was not necessary to read the paragraphs also in the aforesaid way. Sometimes I read the first and the last lines of each page and the content was known. Again, when the author was explaining a particular point of view with arguments in any part of his book, I could understand his whole chain of reasoning by merely reading the beginning of his arguments."

18. Narendra's argumentation

At that time Narendra became very fond of argumentation as the result of much study and deep thinking. But he never indulged in sophistry. He always used to support only that which he knew to be true in his heart of hearts. But, if any one expressed before him an idea or opinion contrary to what he knew as true, he could never listen to it passively. He would bring to bear upon the topic a formidable array of arguments and silence the opponent in no time. Rare were the persons who did not bend their heads before his reasoning. It goes without saying that his defeated opponents did not view him with a friendly eye. Hearing but a few words of the opponent, he could understand the trend of the arguments in support of his position and he would be ready with his reply beforehand. Asked how he could find such fine arguments ever ready to defeat his opponent, he once said, "How many new thoughts are there in the world? If those few thoughts are known together with the reasons for and against them, no necessity for further thinking ever arises and the man is always ready with the replies. For, whatever reason the opponent might adduce in favour of his position, it cannot but be one or the other of those few. Rare indeed are the persons who can give to the world new ideas and thoughts on any subject."

Born with a keen intellect, an extraordinary memory and the power of deep thinking, Narendra could master everything in a very short time, and hence had no lack of leisure for recreation and sports and games as well as

for enjoying the pleasure of the company of his friends. Seeing him thus spending much time in mirth and merriment people thought he did not attend to his studies at all. Trying to imitate him in these matters, many boys actually spoiled their career as students.

19. Narendra's love for physical exercise

Narendra had as great a love for the practice of all kinds of physical exercises as for the acquisition of knowledge. When he was a child, his father bought a pony for him. As a result, he became a good horseman as he grew older. He learnt almost all those arts—gymnastics, wrestling, boxing, stick and sword play, exercises with clubs, swimming, etc., that improved his bodily strength and gave him skill and agility. In those days general competitions were held in these arts and the successful persons were awarded prizes in the Hindu Fair established by Navagopal Mitra. Narendra was sometimes seen amongst these competitors.

20. His courage, and love for friends

From his childhood, Nature had equipped him with indomitable courage and love for his friends. These qualities helped him very much by making him the foremost in all the groups he entered and a leader in his student-life and afterwards. Once when he was but eight, he went with his friends to Metiaburuz to the south of Calcutta to see the Zoological gardens of Wazid Ali, the former Nawab of Lucknow. The boys raised subscriptions from among themselves and hired a boat at the Chandpalghat for their trips to and fro. On their way back, one of them became sick and vomited in the boat. The Muslim boatman became very angry and when the boat reached the Chandpalghat, told them that he would not allow any one of them to get down, if they did not clean the boat. The boys asked him to have it cleaned by some one and were ready to pay for the labour; but he did not agree. Then there arose an altercation and gradually there was going to be a free fight between the two parties. All the boatmen that were there came together and were ready to beat the boys. The latter did not know what they should do. Narendra was the youngest of them all. In the confusion that

arose on account of the altercation with the boatmen, he gave them the slip and got down from the boat. Seeing how very young he was the boatmen did not prevent him from doing so. When he stood on the bank he saw that the affair was gradually growing to be serious. When he was considering how he could save his friends, he saw two English soldiers going for a walk. Narendra walked up to them at a brisk pace, saluted them and caught hold of their hands. Although his knowledge of English was quite rudimentary, he somehow explained the affair to them in a few words and signs as he went on pulling them towards the place of occurrence. The two soliders, charmed with the behaviour of this young boy of pleasing looks, took kindly to him. They came with quick steps to where the boat was, understood the situation, and raising the canes in their hands, commanded the boatmen to let go the boys. Seeing that they were white soldiers of the army, all the boatmen moved away to their own boats. Narendra's friends heaved a sigh of relief. The soldiers were pleased with Narendra's free and fearless behaviour and invited him to go to the theatre with them. Narendra, however, declined the invitation with thanks and bade them good-bye.

21. How cleverly he secured permission to go on board the ship Syrapis

There are other events also of his boyhood which prove his great courage. It will not be out of place to mention one or two here. Narendra was ten or twelve, when Edward VII, then the Prince of Wales, visited India. A gigantic man-of-war of the British Navy, the Syrapis, came to Calcutta at that time and many people of Calcutta were granted permits to go on board to see the inside of that ship. Desirous of seeing it along with his friends, the boy Narendranath went to the office at Chowringhee with an application for getting a permit; but he saw that the gate-keeper did not allow any one except very respectable people to go in. Standing close by and trying to invent some means to see the English officer, he began to observe those who returned with permits from the office. He saw that all of them went to a verandah on the second floor of that office. Narendra thought that it was perhaps the place where the English officer was receiving applications and issuing permits. Searching some other passage leading to that place, he found that in one corner on the side of the house

there was a narrow flight of iron stairs for the use of the servants of the English officer, leading to the room behind the said verandah. Knowing full well that there was a great probability of his being ill-treated if any one happened to see him, he took courage in both hands and went up to the second floor by that flight of stairs. Entering the verandah through the officer's room, he saw that applicants were crowding round him and he was incessantly signing permits with his head bent over a table. He stood behind all of them and getting the permit at the right time, saluted the officer and came out of the office by the front staircase like all others.

22. Danger at the time of fixing a trapeze in the club

At that time, there was a club on the Cornwallis street for the purpose of teaching physical exercise to the boys of Simla in Calcutta. It was Navagopal Mitra, the founder of the Hindu Fair, who had established it. As it was very near Narendra's house, he went there every day with his friends and practised physical exercise. As they had been acquainted with Navagopal Babu, a neighbour, for some time previously, he put them in charge of the management of the club. One day, the boys failed, in spite of great efforts, to erect a heavy wooden frame for a trapeze. A crowd assembled on the road to see the boys do it, but no one was ready to help them. Seeing a stout English sailor standing in the crowd, Narendra requested him to help them. He gladly agreed and joined the boys. The boys then began to pull up the head of the frame by means of a rope and the sailor was helping them in making its two legs enter slowly into the sockets. The work was going on well when the rope gave way and the wooden frame fell back on the ground. And one of its legs suddenly went up and struck the sailor on the head. He fell unconscious. Seeing the sailor unconscious and his wound bleeding profusely, every one concluded that he was dead and, afraid of the Police, fled howsoever they could. Narendra and one or two of his close friends only stayed on there and applied their minds to inventing some means to bring the sailor to life. Narendra tore a part of his own cloth, soaked it in water, bandaged the wound and went on sprinkling water on the sailor's face and fanning him. When he regained consciousness, he was carried into the school building, the Training Academy building, close by.

Word was then sent to Navagopal Babu to come soon with a doctor. The doctor came, examined the sailor and said, “The wound is not serious; he will require a week’s nursing to come round.” He recovered within that period, thanks to Narendra’s nursing and good arrangement for medicine, diet, etc. Raising a small subscription from a few respectable gentlemen of that quarter, Narendra gave the sailor some provision for his journey and bade him good-bye. We have heard of many other events indicative of Narendra’s coolness in the face of dangers during his boyhood.

23. Narendra’s devotion to truth

Narendra was truthful from his boyhood. When he reached his youth that zeal for telling the truth increased a hundredfold. He said, “I never terrified children by speaking of hobgoblins as I was afraid of uttering a falsehood and scolded all whom I saw doing it. As the result of English education and my frequenting the Brahmo Samaj, the devotion to verbal expression of truth increased so much then.”

24. His fondness for the enjoyment of harmless pleasures

Narendra was always in smiles because he was born with a robust frame, a keen intellect, a wonderful memory and a pure heart. He engaged himself in all kinds of gymnastics with an abandon, learnt dancing, and music both vocal and instrumental without any hesitation, and joined his friends in all sorts of mirth and merriment with a gusto; but all this only so long as they did not overstep the limits of morality. Unable to understand the cause of that cheerfulness of his, superficial observers very often counted it a defect of his character. But the spirited Narendra took no notice of people’s praise or blame. His proud head and heart never condescended to disprove their false calumniation.

All his life it was natural with Narendra to be kind to the poor. In his childhood, whenever a beggar came to the house, he gave him whatever he wanted, even valuable clothes, utensils, etc. The family scolded him when they came to know of it and took the articles back from the beggars paying them money. When this had happened a few times, one day his mother kept

the boy confined in a room on the first floor of the house. At that time a beggar came and prayed loudly for alms and Narendra threw down to him through a window a few pieces of his mother's precious clothes.

25. Narendra's anger

His mother used to say, "Narendra had a great foible even from his childhood. If he was angry at any time for any reason, he lost himself altogether and would shatter furniture etc., to pieces and scatter them in all directions. I prayed to Visvanatha at Kasi for a son and vowed Him offerings if one should be born, and He perhaps sent me one of His demons. Otherwise why should he behave like a demon when angry?" She, however, discovered a wonderful remedy for that anger of the child. When she found that he could by no means be quietened, she remembered Viswanatha and poured one or two jarfuls of water over his head; and the wonder of it was that the boy's anger would at once vanish. Shortly after he had met the Master at Dakshineswar, one day Narendranath said to us, "I might not have gained anything else by this practice of religion; but it is certain that I have gained control over my terrible anger by His grace. Formerly I used to lose all control over myself in rage and be seized with repentance afterwards. But now if anyone does me a great harm or even beats me severely, I don't become so very angry."

26. The equal development of Narendra's head and heart

Rarely are people seen in the world with equally well-developed heads and hearts. Those who have these surely make a mark in society. Again, those who manifest their own uniqueness in the spiritual world are also seen to possess a finely developed power of imagination from their childhood. This becomes clear when we study Narendra's life. The reader will easily understand, if one or two examples are given.

27. Narendra was absorbed in meditation on his way to Raipur

At one time Narendra's father stayed for some time at Raipur in Central India on .some business. Knowing that he would have to live there for a long time, he had his family brought to that place shortly afterwards. The charge of taking them was entrusted to Narendra. He was then fourteen or fifteen only. The place was not then connected by railway. So one had to travel by bullock cart for more than a fortnight through dense forests full of beasts of prey. Although he had to suffer many physical hardships, he did not feel it at all on account of the wonderful beauty of the forest regions which he enjoyed. His heart was altogether charmed when he was directly acquainted for the first time with the boundless power and endless love of Him who had adorned the earth with such incomparable robes and ornaments. He said, "What I saw and felt when going through the forest has for ever remained firmly imprinted in my memory, particularly a certain event of one day. We had to travel by the foot of the Vindhya mountains of high peaks on that day. The peaks of the ranges on both sides of the road rose very high in the sky; bending under the weight of fruits and flowers, various kinds of trees and creepers produced wonderful beauty on the sides of the mountains; birds of various colours flying from arbour to arbour or down on the ground in search of food, filled the quarters with sweet notes. I saw all these and felt an extraordinary peace in my mind. The slowly moving bullock carts arrived at a place where two mountain peaks, coming forward as in love, locked themselves up in an embrace over the narrow forest path. Observing carefully below the meeting points I saw that there was a very big cleft from the crest to the foot of the mountain on one side of the path and filling that cleft, there was hanging in it an enormous honey-comb, the result of the bees' labour for ages. Filled with wonder, as I was pondering over the beginning and the end of that kingdom of bees, my mind became so much absorbed in the thought of the infinite power of God, the controller of the three worlds, that I completely lost my consciousness of the external world for some time. I do not remember how long I was lying in the bullock cart in that condition. When I regained normal consciousness, I found that we had crossed that place and come far away. As I was alone in the cart, no one could know anything about it." It was perhaps the first time when, with the help of a strong power of imagination he entered the closed region of deep meditation and was completely merged in it.

28. The Sannyasin grandfather of Narendra

We shall give here a brief account of Narendra's forefathers and bring the present chapter to a close. The Datta family of Simla, divided into many branches, was one of the ancient families of Calcutta. This family was the foremost amongst the middle class Kayasthas in wealth, social position, and learning. Narendra's great-grandfather, Rammohan Datta, an advocate, earned enough money, maintained a large family and was held in esteem by his friends and particularly by his neighbours at Gaurmohan Mukerjee's Lane in Simla where, in his own house, he spent the full length of his life. Durgacharan, his son, inherited enormous wealth from his father, but developed dispassion for the world at an early age and embraced the life of an itinerant monk. Durgacharan, it is said, was devoted to monks and holy men from his boyhood. That inclination of his kept him engaged in the study of the scriptures from his youth and made him a good scholar in a short time. Though married, Durgacharan had no attachment to the world. He used to spend much time in the company of holy men in his own garden. Swami Vivekananda said that his grandfather Durgacharan left his family for ever shortly after begetting a child, as the scriptures enjoin. Though he left his family and went away, Durgacharan twice met his wife and relatives by the will of Providence. His son Viswanath was then two or three years old. His wife and relatives came to Kasi perhaps in search of him and stayed there for some time. As railways had not been constructed then, people of respectable families used to come by boat to Kasi, the abode of the universal Lord. Durgacharan's wife too accompanied the party. At one place on her way, the child Viswanath fell into the waters of the Ganga. His mother saw it first and immediately jumped into the water. The unconscious mother was lifted into the boat with great effort, when she was seen to have firmly clasped the arm of her young child. It was thus that the unbounded love of the mother saved the life of the child.

In Kasi, Durgacharan's wife went daily to visit Lord Visvesvara. One day, when the road was slippery on account of a shower, she slipped and fell in front of the holy temple. A casual passer-by, a monk, saw this and went up to her with a rapid step and lifting her carefully, made her sit on the step of the door of the temple and was examining whether she was hurt in any part

of the body. But the moment the two pairs of eyes met, Durgacharan and his wife recognized each other. And the monk Durgacharan, without looking at her for a second time, disappeared from there.

It is a convention that a monk should visit his birth-place which, according to the scriptures, is "superior even to heaven" twelve years after he embraces the life of an itinerant monk. Durgacharan, therefore, came once to Calcutta after twelve years and stayed in the house of a former friend of his whom he requested earnestly to see that the news of his coming did not reach his relatives. His friend, a worldly man, disregarded the request of Durgacharan and communicated the news secretly to his relatives. They came in a party and took Durgacharan home almost by force. He went home, it is true, but without speaking with any one, sat silent and motionless like a log of wood in a corner of the house with his eyes shut. It is said that he sat there three days and three nights continuously without changing his seat. His relatives were afraid that he might fast unto death and kept the door of the room open as before. It was seen on the morrow that the monk Durgacharan had disappeared unnoticed.

29. Viswanath, Narendra's father

Acquiring great learning in Persian and English, Viswanath, the son of Durgacharan, became an attorney of the Calcutta High Court. He was generous and loving to his friends. Although he earned a good deal, he could leave nothing behind. It was perhaps a quality which he inherited from his father that he could not be economical: Viswanath's nature differed greatly indeed from that of an ordinary man of the world in many respects. For example, thoughts of the morrow never disturbed him; he helped people without any discrimination whether they were deserving or not; he was extremely affectionate to his relatives and yet he could remain free from anxiety without having any news of them for a long time when he was living away from them.

30. Viswanath's love of music

Viswanath was intelligent and of ready understanding. He had great love for music and other fine arts. Swami Vivekananda said that his father had a sweet voice and could sing beautifully Nidhu Babu's Tappa[1] without learning music systematically. Contrary to the general impression of the age, he regarded music as a harmless pastime and made his eldest son Narendranath learn it with the same care and attention as he was prosecuting his studies. His wife Bhuvaneswari too could perfectly master devotional songs with their tune, cadence, etc., which she had heard sung but once by the Vaishnava beggars and the beggars of the night.

31. Viswanath's Muslim manners and customs

Viswanath had a great love for reading the Bible and lyrics of the Persian poet Hafez. A chapter or two from the Holy Bible dealing with the life of the sweet and glorious Jesus were among his daily readings. He sometimes read to his wife, sons, and others a little of these and of the love lyrics of Hafez. He admired and adopted some Muslim manners and customs while he lived for some time in places like Lucknow, Lahore, etc., and they stuck to him for life. It is perhaps due to this that the custom of taking Pollau daily was introduced into his family.

32. Viswanath's love for merriment

Viswanath was as grave and serious as he was witty and humorous. If any one of his sons or daughters did anything wrong, he did not scold them severely but made it known to his or her friends in such a way that he or she was ashamed and never did it again. The reader will understand this from an event we are going to mention here as an example. One day his eldest son, Narendra, had an altercation with his mother over a certain matter and spoke to her one or two harsh words. Instead of scolding him at all for it, Viswanath wrote with a piece of charcoal in big letters on the door of the room in which Narendra received his companions that Naren Babu had used such and such words towards his mother. Whenever Narendra and his friends were about to enter that room their eyes fell on those words; and Narendra looked small for a long time because of his own misbehaviour.

33. Viswanath's generosity

Viswanath maintained a large family which included distant relatives. He was prodigal in supplying them with food etc. Living on his bounty, some of his distant relatives led idle lives while some others went further and relieved the tedium of their lives by having recourse to strong drinks and other intoxicants. When he grew up, Narendra very often complained that his father had been generous to a fault towards those persons. Viswanath gravely replied, "It is not now, my boy, that you can imagine how full of misery this human life is. When you come to understand it, you will view with a forgiving eye these miserable souls who use intoxicants to snatch a momentary relief from this too bitter a life."

34. Viswanath's death

Viswanath had many sons and daughters. All of them were endowed with innumerable good qualities. But most of the daughters died young. Narendranath was very dear to his parents as he was born after the birth of three or four of his sisters. His father died suddenly of heart-failure, when he was preparing for the B.A. examination in the winter of 1883. This sudden death of the over-generous Viswanath left the family penniless.

35. Narendra's mother

We have heard much of the greatness of Narendra's mother Sri Bhuvaneswari. She combined in herself great physical beauty and devotion to deities. Her cleverness and intelligence were shown to advantage by her able management of the very big family of her husband, placed solely on her shoulders. She managed it so easily and efficiently that it gave her enough time for knitting and other artistic pursuits. Her education was extremely limited, not going beyond the reading of the *Ramayana,* the *Mahabharata* and some other religious books; but she learnt orally many things from her husband, sons, and others so well that in conversation she was taken to be highly educated. Her memory and her power of retention were indeed great. She could repeat a thing when she had heard it only once and remembered very old sayings and events as if they were of the day

before. Fallen on bad days after her husband's death, she was put on her mettle and showed wonderful patience, calmness, frugality and adaptability to sudden change of circumstances. The lady who spent a thousand rupees monthly to manage her household affairs, had now only thirty rupees a month to maintain herself and her sons and daughters with. But she was never for a day seen to be dejected. She managed every affair of her family with that meagre income in such a way that those who saw it took her monthly expenditure to be much higher. One shudders indeed to think of the terrible condition into which Bhuvaneswari fell at the sudden death of her husband. There was no certain income with which to meet the needs of her family; and yet she had to maintain her old mother, sons and daughters brought up in opulence, and meet the expenses for the education of her children. Her relatives who had been enabled to earn a decent living by her husband's generosity and influence, now found an opportunity to their liking and, far from helping her, were even determined to deprive her of her just possessions. Her eldest son Narendranath, possessed of many good qualities, failed to find a job in spite of his best efforts in various ways; and losing all attraction for the world, he was getting ready to renounce it for ever. One naturally feels respect and reverence for Sri Bhuvaneswari when one thinks of the manner in which she performed her duties even in that terrible condition. When we discuss the close relationship of Narendranath with the Master, we shall have to revert again to the topic of the straitened circumstances of the family during this period. Therefore, instead of giving a further detailed description of it here, let us now tell the reader of Narendra's coming to Dakshineswar for the second time.

Footnote

1. The relatives of Narendra headed by Ramchandra tried their best to persuade him to consent to this marriage.

1. O mind, come, let us go home. Why do you travel in the foreign land of the world in a foreigner's garb?

The five elements and objects of the senses are all inimical to you; none of them are your own. Deluded with the love of others, you have forgotten the One who is your own.

O my mind, go on the path of truth. Light the lamp of love, have it always with you and go forward. Take carefully with you the secret provision of devotion.

Greed, delusion, etc., the dacoits, rob the traveller of everything. This is why I say, 'O mind, let the two, the control of internal organs and that of the external ones, keep watch.'

When you are tired, stay in the rest-house of holy company and, when you lose your way, ask it of those, who stay there.

If you find any cause of fear on your way, appeal to the king with all your might. The king wields great power there, before whom death quails in terror.

1. A kind of light music.

CHAPTER IV
NARENDRA'S SECOND AND THIRD VISITS TO THE MASTER

1. The reason why Narendra took a long while to visit the Master for the second time, even though he took him to be a real lover of God

When persons who truly depend on their own exertion and have formed fixed aspirations, find greatness in others, they admit it freely and feel a wonderful joy in their hearts. Again, if they find that greatness manifested in any one to an extraordinary degree, their minds constantly dwell on the thought of it, and the more they do so the more are they ravished and dazed in admiration. This goes on for some time. But that does not deflect them from their own path or make them imitate such a person—their lives are not coloured by the acts and thoughts of the other person except through long association, companionship and the sweet bond of love. Narendra was in that state when he first met the Master at Dakshineswar. Although attracted by the Master's extraordinary renunciation and the absolute agreement between his thoughts and words, Narendra's heart did not consent to accept him as the ideal of life. Recollections of the Master's wonderful character and behaviour, no doubt, arose again and again in his mind for some time after his return from Dakshineswar; yet, he felt no urgency in fulfilling his promise of going to him a second time, and applied his mind to doing what he considered his own duty. His impression that the Master was a monomaniac for which his Western education was responsible, was undoubtedly a great factor in postponing his visit indefinitely. Again, besides practising meditation, and studying in the college, Narendra was then engaged daily in systematically learning music and taking physical exercise. Moreover, in imitation of the Brahmo Samaj, he was then forming

associations for prayer and discussion in different parts of Calcutta for the mental and spiritual improvement of his friends. Was it, therefore, a matter of surprise that his thought of going to Dakshineswar remained suppressed for a month? Although he was thus held back by his sense of daily duties, his memory and truthfulness were inciting him to go alone to Dakshineswar to fulfil his promise as soon as he could find time. So, we find Narendra one day wending his way alone to Dakshineswar for the second time about a month after his first visit. We give the reader here that day's events as described to us later on by himself:

2. Narendra came for the second time and had by the power of the Master, a wonderful direct perception

"I had no idea that the Dakshineswar Kali temple was so far from Calcutta, for I had gone there only once and that by carriage. I used to visit Dasarathi Sannyal, Satkari Lahiri and other friends at Baranagar and thought that Rasmani's garden must be somewhere near their houses. But the journey seemed to be never ending, however far I proceeded. Anyway, enquiring of many people, I reached Dakshineswar at last and went direct to the Master's room. I saw him sitting alone, merged in himself, on the small bedstead placed near the bigger one. There was no one with him. No sooner had he seen me than he called me joyfully to him and made me sit at one end of the bedstead. I sat down but found him in a strange mood. He spoke indistinctly something to himself, looked steadfastly at me and was slowly coming towards me. I thought another scene of lunacy was going to be enacted. Scarcely had I thought so when he came to me and placed his right foot on my body, and immediately I had a wonderful experience. I saw with my eyes open that all the things of the room together with the walls were rapidly whirling and receding into unknown region and my I-ness together with the whole universe was, as it were, going to vanish in the all-devouring great void. I was then overwhelmed with a terrible fear; I had known that the destruction of I-ness was death and that death was before me, very near at hand. Unable to control myself, I cried out loudly and said, 'Ah! What is it you have done to me? I have my parents, you know.' Giving out a loud laugh to hear those words of mine and touching my chest with his hand, he

said, ‘Let it then cease now; it need not be done all at once; it will come to pass in course of time.’ I was amazed to see that extraordinary experience of mine vanish as quickly as it had come when he touched me in that manner and said those words. I came to the normal state and saw things inside and outside the room standing still as before.

3. Narendra’s endeavour to find out the cause of that perception, and not to be overwhelmed in that way in future

“Although it has taken so much time to describe the event, it actually happened in a much shorter time. It produced a great revolution in my mind. I was puzzled and went on linking what it was that had happened. I have seen indeed that the experience came and vanished suddenly by the power of this wonderful person. I had read in books about mesmerism and hypnotism. I was led to wonder if it was anything like these. But my heart refused to admit it. For, persons of great will-power spread their influence on weak minds only and bring about such conditions; but, I am by no means such; rather I have been till now feeling proud of being very intelligent and possessed of great strength of mind. I have not indeed been charmed and have not become a puppet in his hands like ordinary people, who are reduced to that state when they are in the company of persons possessed of extraordinary qualities. Rather I came to the certain conclusion since I saw him first, that he was a monomaniac. Why should I then have been suddenly in that state? I pondered over it but could conclude nothing; there it remained in my heart, an unsolved problem of great import. I remembered the words of the great poet, ‘There are more things in heaven and earth, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.’ I thought that this might be one such; I reflected and came to the conclusion that the truth about it could not be ascertained. I was, however, determined to be on my guard so that this wonderful madman might not in future bring about such a change in my mind by spreading his influence and gaining mastery over it.

4. Narendra thought variously of the Master and resolved to understand him properly

“I continued thinking—how could I consider that person to be mad who could shatter to pieces the structure of a mind like mine, possessed of a strong power of will and filled with firm impressions, and who could refashion it after his own pattern like a ball of clay? But how could I regard the manner in which he addressed me and the words he spoke aside to me during my first visit to him as otherwise than the raving of a madman? Therefore, just as I could not find out the cause of the aforesaid experience, even so, I could not come to any certain conclusion about this person, pure and simple-hearted like a child. From my boyhood I could not rest satisfied without coming to a conclusion with the help of observation and investigation, reason and argumentation about each person and thing I came in contact with. That nature of mine received a severe shock that day, which created an anguish in my heart. As a result of this, there arose a firmer determination in my mind to understand thoroughly the nature and power of that wonderful person.

5. The Master behaved towards Narendra like one long familiar with him

“My time passed that day in various thoughts and resolutions. But the Master appeared to be a different person altogether after that event and began to feed me lovingly and behave in all matters like one long familiar with me. His behaviour resembled that of people conducting themselves towards their dear friends or relatives when they meet after a long separation. He fed me, talked to me, loved me and cut jokes with me as best he could, and still he remained unsatisfied, as if all these fell far short of what he wanted to do. That love and behaviour of his also caused not a little anxiety in me. Seeing the shades of evening falling, I took leave of him for that day. Pained to the core of his heart, he extracted a promise from me, as on the previous occasion, that I would return to him at the earliest, and then allowed me to go home. And I left Dakshineswar musing on what had happened and on how to solve the problem.”

6. Narendra’s third visit

We do not know how long after his second visit Narendra came again to the Master. But seeing that a strong desire arose in his mind to know and understand him after he had become acquainted with that wonderful power of his, we think the delay was not long. That eagerness must have brought him to the lotus feet of the Master at the earliest possible opportunity. But it might have been at the end of a week during which period he had to attend college. When there once arose an inquiry about anything in his mind, Narendra paid no attention to his food, dress or leisure and found no rest in his mind till he could solve it. It is therefore understandable that his mind was in a similar condition in the effort to comprehend the Master. Again, it does not take one long to understand that he made his mind very firm and cautious before he came to the Master for the third time, lest it should be made to undergo a change as on the previous occasion. But what happened was inconceivable. We give the reader here what we heard from both the Master and Narendranath.

7. Narendra lost normal consciousness at the touch of the Master in ecstasy

On that occasion the Master asked him to accompany him for a walk to Jadu Mallick's garden hard by, probably because there was a crowd at the Kali temple at that time. Maybe, there was some other reason. Jadunath himself and his mother had great respect and reverence for the Master. They had given orders to the chief officer of their garden that, even if they were absent, the parlour facing the Ganga should be opened for the Master to sit in whenever he came for a walk there. The Master walked with Narendra for some time in the garden on the bank of the Ganga that day. Talking with Narendra, he came to that parlour, sat down there and entered into ecstasy shortly afterwards. Narendra sat near at hand and was calmly observing that state of the Master, when the latter suddenly approached and touched him as before. Although he exercised great caution because of his previous experience, Narendra became completely overwhelmed at that powerful touch. He lost consciousness completely that day, not partially as had happened on the previous occasion. When he regained consciousness after

sometime, he saw that the Master was passing his hand on his chest. On seeing him come to normal state, the Master smiled gently and sweetly.

Narendra did not tell us anything of the nature of the experience he had after he had lost his consciousness. We thought he did not express it to us because it was a secret. But we realized later from what the Master told us one day in the course of his conversation on this event, that it was natural for Narendra not to have known it. The Master said:

8. The Master put many questions to Narendra in that state

"When Narendra had lost his normal consciousness I asked him that day many questions, such as who he was, where he came from, why he came (was born), how long he would be here (in this world) and so on and so forth. Entering into the depth of his being, he gave proper answers to all these questions. These answers of his confirmed what I thought and saw and knew about him in my visions. It is forbidden to say all those things. But I have known from all these that on the day when he will know who he is, he will no more remain in this world; he will, with a strong power of will, immediately give up his body through Yoga. Narendra is a great soul perfect in meditation."

Once again, later, the Master told us a little of the visions he had had about Narendra. We narrate them here for the convenience of the reader. For, when we learned of those visions from the Master, we understood that he had had them before Narendra came to Dakshineswar. The Master said:

9. The Master's wonderful vision about Narendra

"One day I saw that, through Samadhi, my mind was going up by a luminous path. Going beyond the gross world studded with the sun, the moon and stars, it entered first of all into the subtle world of ideas. The more it began to ascend to higher and higher strata of that realm, the more did I see beautiful ideal forms of deities existing on both sides of the path. It came gradually to the last extremity of that region. I saw a fence made of light there separating the realm of the divisible from that of the indivisible. Leaping over that fence, the mind entered by degrees the realm of the

indivisible. I saw that there was no more any person or thing there having a form. As if afraid to enter there, even the gods and goddesses possessing heavenly bodies exercised their authority over realms far below. But the very next moment I saw seven wise Rishis having bodies consisting of divine Light only, seated there in Samadhi. I felt that, in virtue and knowledge, love and renunciation, they had excelled even the gods and goddesses, not to speak of human beings. Astonished, I was pondering over their greatness when I saw before me that a part of the homogeneous mass of Light of the "Abode" of the indivisible, devoid of the slightest tinge of difference, became solidified and converted into the form of a divine Child. Coming down to one of those Rishis, and throwing Its soft and delicate arms round his neck It embraced him and, afterwards, calling him with Its ambrosial words sweeter than the music of the Vina, made great efforts to wake him up from Samadhi. The Rishi woke up at the delicate and loving touch and looked on at that wonderful child with half-shut eyes, free from winking. Seeing the state of his bright face, full of delight, I thought that the Child was the treasure of his heart—their familiarity was of eternity. The extraordinary divine Child then expressed infinite joy and said to him, 'I am going, you must come with me.' The Rishi said nothing at that request but his loving eyes expressed his hearty assent. Afterwards, looking on the child with loving eyes for some time, he entered again into Samadhi. Astonished, I then saw that a part of the mind and body of that Rishi, converted into the form of bright light, came down to the earth along the reverse path. Hardly had I seen Narendra for the first time when I knew that he was that Rishi."[1]

10. Narendra's conviction about the Master—as the result of his wonderful direct experience

Narendra must have been astounded when that change in his mental state was produced for the second time by the influence of the Master's wonderful power. He felt in his heart of hearts how unavailing the power of his mind and intellect was, compared with that insuperable divine power. His former impression about the Master, that he was a monomaniac, was changed. But it cannot be said that he understood the meaning and purpose of what the Master said to him in seclusion, when he was at his lotus feet

for the first time at Dakshineswar. The Master, he felt, was an extraordinary great soul possessed of divine power; the Master could turn at will the mind of a man like him to a higher direction; and with it he understood that, as the Master's will was completely identified with that of the divine Lord, that kind of desire did not arise in the Master's mind in respect of all; and it was not a small piece of good fortune for him to have the grace of such a sublime soul without asking for it.

11. The consequent change of Narendra's conception of the Guru

Narendra was compelled to come to the aforesaid conclusion and to change many of his former conceptions in the wake of it. He had formerly a great objection to accept as Guru or spiritual guide one who possessed small powers and visions and was weak like himself and to engage himself in carrying out indiscriminately whatever he said. It is needless to say that that attitude was confirmed when he joined the Brahmo Samaj. As the result of the events of those two days, that conception of his was severely shaken. He understood that such souls, though rare, are actually born in the world—souls, whose extraordinary love, purity, penance and renunciation far surpass the conception of God existing in the little minds and intellects of ordinary men. Therefore, if they are accepted as Gurus, ordinary men will be greatly benefited. Consequently he was ready to accept the Master as the Guru; but he could not go so far as to accept indiscriminately whatever the Master said.

12. Narendra grew in renunciation and detachment in the company of the Master

The idea that God could not be realized without renunciation prevailed in Narendra's mind from his boyhood. It was due to his impressions from previous births. This accounts for the fact that, although he became a regular member of the Brahmo Samaj, he was never inclined to join their meetings and associations for the reform of the institution of marriage. This idea of renunciation, latent in him, now grew wonderfully, as he had the

blessed privilege of meeting the all-renouncing Master and of being acquainted with his extraordinary powers.

13. Narendra resolved not to accept anything said by the Master without testing it

But one thing became the greatest concern of Narendra's thought from now on. On coming in contact with such great powerful souls, the human mind, he thought, generally believes in every word they say without weighing it properly or at all; and he must save himself from that. Therefore, although he was now cherishing great respect and reverence for the Master on account of the events of the two days mentioned above, he was nevertheless determined never to accept anything regarding the Master's visions and experiences without personally having an immediate knowledge of them, or subjecting them to a most rigorous test of reason, even if it led him to incur the displeasure of the Master. Consequently, just as on the one hand, he was solicitous of keeping his mind always ready to receive the unknown truths of the spiritual world, so, on the other hand,, he engaged himself, since then, in putting to a severe test the Master's wonderful behaviour and visions.

14. Narendra's conduct since then

It was evident to the keen intellect of Narendra that only by accepting the Master as an Incarnation of God, could the Master's strange words during their first meeting, because of which he had considered him a monomaniac, yield a consistent meaning. But how could his truth-seeking and rational mind accept the fact all of a sudden? So he decided that if ever God gave him the power of understanding those things, he would discuss them. Thus relegating the problem to a dark corner of his mind, he now devoted himself to learning from and discussing with the Master how to realize God and be blessed.

15. The then mental state of Narendra

A powerful mind feels a strong resistance from within when, at the time of accepting a new truth, it has to change its former convictions. Narendra was now in that predicament. Though acquainted with the Master's wonderful power, he could not completely accept him, and though feeling attracted, he tried to stand aloof from him. We shall see later how matters stood as the result of such an effort of his.

Footnote

1. The Master described this vision to us in his extraordinary, simple language. It is impossible for us to reproduce perfectly that language. Having no other course left open to us; we have kept his language as far as it lay in our power, and have expressed it briefly here. Asking him about the Child of his vision, one day, we came to know that the Master himself assumed the form of that Child.

CHAPTER V
THE MASTER'S SELFLESS LOVE AND NARENDRANATH

1. The extraordinary experiences of Narendra in his early life:

(1) He saw a light before falling asleep

Narendranath, we said, was born with wonderful good impressions. This fact accounts for a number of unusual experiences he used to have even before he visited the Master. We narrate here a few of them as examples. Narendra said, "I used to see all my life a wonderful point of light between my eyebrows, as soon as I shut my eyes in order to go to sleep, and I used to observe attentively its various changes. So that it might be convenient to see it, I used to lie on my bed in the way people bow down touching the ground with their foreheads. The extraordinary point kept changing its colours and increasing in size, became gradually converted into the form of a ball and, bursting at last, covered my body from head to foot with white liquid light. As soon as that happened, I lost consciousness and fell asleep. I believed that all people went to sleep that way. I was long under that impression. When I grew up and began to practise meditation, that point of light used to come before me, first of all, as soon as I closed my eyes and concentrated my mind on it. In those days I daily practised meditation with a few friends according to the instruction of Maharshi Devendranath. We talked among ourselves about the nature of visions and experiences each of us had. At that time I came to know from what they said that they never had the vision of such light and that none of them went to sleep in that way.

(2) Sometimes, coming to a certain place or in contact with some thing or person, he used to feel he had already known them

"Again, since my childhood, it happened sometimes that when I saw a thing, place or person, I had the impression that I was very familiar with it or him; I thought I had seen it or him somewhere before. I tried to recollect, but failed. But that could never convince me that I had not seen them before. This happened very often. Perhaps I was in the company of friends in some place and there was a discussion on a certain subject; at that time someone made a remark and immediately I remembered, 'Ah! I have had talks on this subject with them in this house long before and this person made the same remark at that time also.' I tried to recollect, but could not make out when and where I had talked thus with them. When I came to know of the doctrine of rebirth, I thought I might perhaps have been acquainted with those places and persons during a previous life and that a partial recollection of them sometimes came to my mind in that manner. I was afterwards convinced that such a conclusion on the subject was not reasonable. Now[1] it appears to me that before I was born I somehow, as on a cinematographic film, saw those persons with whom I was to be familiar in this life and a memory of these arose in my mind from time to time after I was born."

2. Narendra's direct experience of the Master's divine powers. His reflection on and wonder at them

Hearing of the pure life and of the ecstasy of the Master from many people[2] Narendranath came to see him. He never imagined even in a dream that when he saw him, he would undergo any mental change or wonderful experience. But he did undergo. The experiences he had had before seemed to be commonplace and trifling compared with those extraordinary ones he had on the two days of his second and third visits to the Master. His uncommon intelligence had to accept defeat when he tried to fathom the depth of the Master's personality—the knotty problem eluded solution. For, he could find not an iota of reason to doubt that it was through the

inscrutable divine power of the Master that he had had those wonderful experiences. And the more he mused on it, the greater grew his amazement.

3. How great was Narendra's fitness for spirituality

One is simply flabbergasted when one thinks of the wonderful experience Narendra had during his second visit to the Master. Such an experience, according to the scriptures, occurs in the life of an ordinary person as the result of long practice of penance and renunciation; and when it appears somehow, the man is beside himself with joy to feel the manifestation of God in the Guru, and entirely surrenders himself to him. It is no small surprise that Narendra did not do so; and it is clear from this how great his fitness was for the spiritual world. He did not altogether lose himself, only because he ranked very high in regard to spiritual fitness. And it was because of this uncommon fitness of his that he could restrain himself so wonderfully. What was more, he engaged himself for a very long time in testing the extraordinary character and behaviour of the Master and in ascertaining their cause. But, although he could check himself and did not completely surrender to the Master, it is an undeniable fact that he was greatly attracted towards him.

4. How far the Master was attracted to Narendra

The Master on his part felt a strong attraction for Narendra from the day they met. Possessed of the immediate knowledge of Brahman, the high-minded Guru became restless owing to an anxious eagerness to pour all the realizations of his spiritual life into the mind of the very worthy disciple, as soon as he met him. That profound eagerness cannot be measured. That unmotivated restlessness, free from the slightest tinge of selfishness, occurs in fulfilment of the divine will in the minds of the Gurus who are perfectly poised and contented in the Self alone. It is under such inspiration that the great souls, the teachers of the world, the moment they see perfectly fit disciples, make them reach the safe haven of the knowledge of Brahman, and the shackles of desires of those disciples fall off, their life's goal is attained and perfection reached.[1]

5. The Master's attempt to give Narendra the knowledge of Brahman on the very first day

There is no doubt that the Master felt strongly inclined to induct Narendra at once into ecstasy, thus making him a knower of Brahman on the very first day he came alone to Dakshineswar. For when, three or four years after this, Narendra surrendered completely to the Master and was again and again praying to him to grant him Nirvikalpa Samadhi, the Master would allude to this event and say jestingly to him in our presence, "Why, did you not then say that you had your parents to serve?" "Look here", said he at other times, "a man died and became a ghost. He lived alone for a long time and sorely felt the need of a companion. He ran in search of one whenever he heard that a man had met with an accident and died, for on such an occasion the man turns into a ghost. But the dead man, he would invariably find much to his chagrin, would be saved from turning into a ghost either by the touch of the water of the Ganga or by some other purifying agency. So he had to return every time quite disconsolate and was forced to live a lonely life. The poor fellow's want of companion was never satisfied. I am also exactly in that position. I thought, when I saw you, 'This time perhaps I shall have a companion.' But you too said that you had your parents. So I could not have a companion." Thus would the Master mention that day's event and very often jest with Narendra.

6. The difference between Narendra's wonderful experiences of the first and of the second day

Noting the terrible fear gripping Narendra's mind when he was at the point of attaining Samadhi, the Master ceased making further efforts. But it raised doubts in the Master's mind. He doubted the truth of the visions and experiences he had had about Narendra some time previously. This is, we guess, the reason why he overwhelmed him with his power, when Narendra came to Dakshineswar for the third time, and knew from him many secrets of his life. His anxiety was removed only when he found Narendra's answers to his questions tallying exactly with his own visions. This proves that Narendra did not have the same kind of ecstasy at Dakshineswar on both the days.

7. The Master's apprehension about Narendra

After the test the Master was free from anxiety in a way; but some apprehension was still lurking in his mind. For, Narendra, the Master saw, had in him in full measure eighteen qualities or manifestations of power, the possession of one or two of which enables a man to acquire extraordinary fame and influence in the world. It would lead to an undesirable contrary result, he thought, if Narendra failed to direct them properly into the spiritual channel by realizing the ultimate truth about God, man and the world. If that happened, Narendra would found a new sect or religion and be famous in the world like other spiritual leaders or prophets. But in that case, it would not be possible for him first to realize himself and then to disseminate the grand catholic truth of the spiritual world, the realization and propagation of which were the crying needs of the modern age, and the world would thus be deprived of its greatest blessing. Therefore, there arose then a great ardent desire in the Master's heart that Narendra should follow him in all respects and, like him, have the immediate knowledge of the grand spiritual truths ready to reveal themselves. The Master used to say, "Just as water-weeds are seen to grow in pools, small ponds, etc., where there is no current of water, so, sects confined within narrow circles arise whenever in the spiritual world man remains contented with partial truths, regarding them as the whole." One is surprised to think in how many ways the Master tried to make Narendra a fit recipient of the perfect truth lest, possessed of extraordinary intelligence and mental qualities as he was, he should go astray and form a sect of his own.

8. The reason of the Master's extraordinary attraction for Narendra

This strange strong attraction of the Master for Narendra, which he had from their very first meeting, did not abate and assume a natural state till he was convinced that there was no more possibility of Narendra going astray in the manner mentioned above. A little reflection on this phenomenon clearly shows that some of its causes were rooted in the Master's extraordinary visions about Narendra, and others in the fear lest, coming under the influence of the modern age, he should willingly take upon

himself some such bondage as the desire for a wife, wealth or fame, and fail even partially to fulfil the ultimate aim of his great life.

9. This attraction was but natural and inevitable

As a result of the Master's long period of penance and renunciation, his limited individual consciousness disappeared and he became eternally identified in consciousness with the Cause of the universe and felt the Lord's work of doing good to humanity as his own. He came to know through the power of this knowledge that it was the will of the benign all-pervading Person that the very great work of removing the causes of the decline of religion in the modern age should be accomplished with his body and mind as the instruments. And it was through the power of the same knowledge that he knew that Narendra was not born to secure some puny little selfish end of his own, but, out of intense love for God, he had come down on earth to help him in the work of doing good to humanity. Is it, therefore, surprising that he should regard the selfless, eternally free Narendra as supremely his own and be strongly attracted towards him? Strange though it might appear to superficial observers, to penetrating eyes this attraction of the Master for Narendra was quite natural and inevitable.

10. The Master's love for Narendra was not of the worldly type

It is beyond our power to give an indication of how intensely the Master regarded Narendranath as his own and how deeply he loved him from the day he met him first. The reasons that prompt worldly people to regard others as their own and bestow their love on them were conspicuous by their absence in this case. But it never fell to our lot to see anywhere else even an iota of the joy or anxiety felt by the Master owing to his union with or separation from Narendra. We had never before an idea that man could love man so selflessly. When we saw the Master's wonderful love for Narendra, we were convinced that the world was sure to witness the day when man would realize the manifestation of God in man and feel blessed by pouring out truly selfless love on that manifestation.

11. Swami Premananda's testimony to that love

Swami Premananda came for the first time to the Master shortly after Narendra had come to be with him. For some reason Narendra could not come to Dakshineswar for about a week or so. Premananda was simply amazed to see the Master's agonizing pain of separation from Narendra and used to describe it to us on many occasions.

12. Swami Premananda came for the first time to Dakshineswar and found the Master's solicitude for Narendra

He said, "Swami Brahmananda and I went to the Hatkhola ghat to take a boat, when I saw Ramdayal Babu there. Knowing that he was also going to Dakshineswar, we got into a boat together, and it was almost dusk when we reached Rani Rasmani's Kali temple. We came to the Master's room and were told that he had gone to the temple to pay obeisance to the Mother of the universe. Asking us to stay there, Swami Brahmananda went towards the temple to bring him. I saw him holding the Master very carefully and coming with him, saying, 'Steps, go up here, down here.' I had already heard that the Master used to become overwhelmed with emotions and lose normal consciousness. Therefore, I knew that he was in ecstasy when I saw him thus coming, reeling like a drunken man. Entering the room in that state, he sat on the small bedstead. Coming shortly afterwards to the normal state, he asked me a few questions about me and my relations and began to examine the features of my face, hands, feet, etc. He held in his hand for some time my forearm from the elbow to the fingers to feel its weight and then said, 'Nice'. He alone knew what he understood by that. Then he asked Ramdayal Babu about Narendra's health. Hearing that he was all right, the Master said, 'It is long since he came here. I should very much like to see him. Please ask him to come once.'

13. What Premananda thought when he saw the terrible anxiety of the Master throughout the night

"A few hours were delightfully spent in religious talks. We took our meal at 10 p.m. and lay down in the verandah to the east of the Master's room

and to the north of the courtyard. Beds were arranged for the Master and Swami Brahmananda in the room. Scarcely had an hour passed, when he came out from his room, with his cloth under his arm-pit, to our bedside and, addressing Ramdayal Babu, said affectionately, 'Are you sleeping?' Both of us sat up hurriedly on our beds and said, 'No sir'. The Master said, 'Look here, as I have not seen Narendra for a long time, I feel as if my whole soul is being forcibly wrung like a wet towel; please ask him to come once and see me. He is a person of pure Sattva, he is Narayana Himself; I cannot have peace of mind if I don't see him now and then.' Ramdayal Babu had been frequenting Dakshineswar for some time past. The boy-like nature of the Master was not, therefore, unknown to him. Seeing that boy-like behaviour of the Master, he knew that he was in ecstasy. He tried to console him saying that he would see Narendra as soon as it was morning and ask him to come, and similar other things. But that mood of the Master was not at all alleviated that night. Knowing that we were having no rest, he would retire to his room now and then for some time. But the next moment he would forget this and come to us again and begin to speak of Narendra's good qualities, expressing pathetically the terrible anguish of his mind on account of Narendra's long absence. Seeing that terrible pang of separation of his, I was astonished and thought, 'How wonderful is his love! And how hard-hearted that person must be for whom his longing is so devastating and behaviour so pathetic!' The night passed that way. In the morning we went to the temple and paid our obeisance to the divine Mother. Then bowing down at the feet of the Master, we took leave of him and returned to Calcutta."

14. What Vaikunthanath said of the Master's love for Narendra

At one time in the year 1883, a friend[1] of ours came to Dakshineswar and saw the Master extremely anxious, because Narendranath had not come for a long time. He says, "The Master's mind became full of Narendra, as it were: he spoke of nothing else but Narendra's good qualities. 'Look here,' said he addressing me, 'Narendra is a man of pure Sattva; he, I have seen, is one of the four[1] belonging to the "Abode of the Indivisible" and one of the "Seven Rishis".[2] There is no limit to his good qualities.' Saying so, the

Master became much worried and was shedding incessant tears like a mother separated from her child. Afterwards, seeing that he was by no means able to control himself and considering what we should think of that behaviour of his, he went with a rapid step to the verandah to the north of his room. Weeping bitterly for some time he, we heard, sobbed out these words with a choked voice: 'Ah! I cannot do without seeing him!' Controlling himself a little after some time, he came into the room and sat down beside us, saying pathetically and sorrowfully, 'I wept so much, but Narendra did not come; the longing to see him has produced a terrible anguish as if my heart was wrung; but he does not at all realize the intensity of the attraction I feel for him.' Saying so he became worried again and went out of the room. Returning to the room a little later, he said, 'What will they think to see that I, a man of such advanced age, am weeping and panting so much for him? You are amongst the people who are my own; I don't feel ashamed in your presence. But, what will others think when they see it? But I can by no means control myself.' We were speechless to see the Master's love for Narendra. We thought Narendra must be a godlike person. Why otherwise was the Master so much attracted towards him? We then said consoling him, 'Ah, it is very wrong of him, sir; he knows you feel so much pain on account of his absence and still he does not come.' Shortly after this event, one day he introduced me to Narendra. I saw that the Master was as delighted when united with Narendra as he was worried when separated from him. We went later to Dakshineswar on the Master's birthday. The devotees that day adorned him beautifully —dressed him up in new attire, flower-garlands, sandal-paste, etc. Kirtan was being sung in new verandah to the east of his room, near the garden. Surrounded by the devotees, the Master listened to it, now entering into ecstasy, now making the Kirtan interesting by interposing extempore a line or two. But he could not enjoy the bliss fully on account of the absence of Narendra. He looked around from time to time and said to us, 'Narendra, I see, has not come.' At about noon Narendra came and bowed down at his feet in the assembly of the devotees. As soon as the Master saw him, he jumped up, sat on his shoulders and went into ecstasy. Afterwards coming to the normal state, he engaged himself in conversing with and feeding him. He listened to the Kirtan no more that day."

15. Although an especial object of the Master's love, Narendra remained unmoved; this demonstrates his uncommon fitness for spirituality

One is surprised to think of the love that is rarely to be found even amongst the gods, of which Narendra was the recipient when he came to the Master. One clearly understands how strong his love for truth was, when one finds that in spite of that unusual ceaseless shower of selfless love, he remained firm and unmoved and went forward to test the Master at every step so that he might attain the wholly unalloyed truth. Surprising as it was, the other side, namely, the Master's magnanimity and absence of egoism, was no less amazing. When one finds that, instead of feeling wounded on account of that unbecoming mood of Narendra's, he submitted himself gladly to be so tested in order that the disciple might have the satisfaction of realizing spiritual truths thoroughly investigated by himself, one's surprise simply transcends all limits. Thus the more we study the relation of the Master with Narendra, the more are we charmed to see the eagerness, on the part of the one, to accept all things only after testing them and, on that of the other, to bring home high spiritual truths to the disciple by submitting to the tests. We shall then understand how a true Guru teaches a highly qualified disciple by keeping intact his spiritual attitudes and how at last he occupies for ever a place of high regard and reverence in the heart of the disciple.

Footnote

1. Narendra told us of this extraordinary experience of his soon after we became acquainted with him. But he came to this latter conclusion only during the last part of his life.

2. When he came to Dakshineswar, Narendra, we said before, was about to appear for the F.A. examination from the General Assembly's Institution, Calcutta. The liberal minded scholar, Mr. Hastie, was then the principal of the college. Narendranath had great regard for this English gentleman for his many-sided genius, pure life and his loving behaviour towards the students. One day as the professor of literature fell suddenly ill, Mr. Hastie came to teach literature to the F.A. students. In the course of a discussion on the poems of Wordsworth he made mention of the poet's going into a trance when he (the poet) experienced the beauty of Nature. As the students did not understand what a trance was, he explained it to them properly and at last said, "That state is produced by purity of mind and its concentration on one particular object. A person fit for such a state is rarely seen. I have seen Ramakrishna Paramahamsa of Dakshineswar attain that state among contemporaries. You will understand it if you go and see once that state of his." Hearing thus of the Master for the first time from Mr. Hastie, Narendra saw the Master first at Surendra's house. Again, as he frequented the Brahmo Samaj, he might have heard of him there also.

1. This is known in the scriptures as the Sambhavi initiation, IV. 4.

1. Vaikunthanath Sannyal.

1. Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Sanatkumara.—Tr.

2. Sana, Sanatkumara, Sanat-sujata, Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Kapila.—Tr.

CHAPTER VI—SECTION 1
THE EXTRAORDINARY RELATION BETWEEN THE MASTER AND NARENDRANATH

1. How long Narendra had the Master's holy company

Narendranath had the privilege of enjoying the holy company of the Master for five years. The reader might take us to mean that he spent those years continuously at the holy feet of the Master at Dakshineswar. It was not so. Like all the other devotees of Calcutta, he also used to come from home and pay visits to the Master during those years. But he, it is certain, visited Dakshineswar at short intervals, as he became an especial object of the infinite love of the Master from the very beginning. It gradually came to be regarded an essential duty of Narendra to go there once or twice a week and, when there was leisure, to spend two, three or more days there. It is not as if there were no deviation from this rule at times. But, greatly attracted to him from the beginning, the Master did not allow him to break that rule to any great extent. When Narendra could not come to Dakshineswar for a week for any reason, the Master would be quite restless to see him and, sending him word, would have him brought to him; or he himself would go to Calcutta and spend a few hours with him. There were, as far as we know, no gaps in Narendra's regular visits to Dakshineswar for two years following his acquaintance with the Master. But he was compelled to break that rule when the whole responsibility of managing his family affairs devolved on his shoulders at the sudden death of his father, soon after his appearing for the B.A. examination, by the beginning of 1884.

2. Five kinds of behaviour of the Master towards Narendra during this period

When we try to analyse the Master's dealings with Narendra during those five years we find five main divisions in them:—

First,—since his first meeting with Narendra, the Master had known with the help of his inward vision that a highly qualified person like Narendra was very rare in the spiritual world and that Narendra was born to render him great assistance in the work which the divine Mother had entrusted to him, namely, the work of renovating the Eternal Religion to serve the needs of the modern times by clearing it of its age-long undesirable accretions.

Second,—he bound Narendra for all eternity with the cord of infinite faith and love.

Third,—he tested him in various ways and knew that his inward vision did not bear false witness to Narendra's greatness and purpose in life.

Fourth,—he taught Narendra in various ways and moulded him in such a way that he might become a fit instrument to fulfil that great purpose of his life.

Fifth,—when the disciple's education was complete, the Master instructed Narendra, now possessed of the immediate knowledge of Brahman, how to proceed with the work of establishing religion and at last confidently placed him in charge of this work as well as of the Order founded by himself.

3. The Master's faith and love for Narendra were born of his wonderful visions

The Master had had some wonderful visions about his greatness, we said, before Narendra came to Dakshineswar. It was owing to the influence of those visions that he regarded Narendra, ever since their acquaintance, with an eye of infinite faith and love. That current of faith and love flowed uniformly in his heart throughout the Master's life and bound Narendra to him with a cord of love that knew no breaking. It is on this, solid foundation of faith and love that the entire structure of the Master's teaching and sometimes the testing of Narendra were built.

4. The reason why the Master tested Narendra

The question may be posed: “Why did the Master test Narendra, though he knew his greatness and the purpose of his advent with the help of his own Yogic visions?” The simple reason is that even god-men like the Master—not to speak of ordinary people—when they enter the realm of Maya and assume a body, have their visions more or less blurred and there arises a possibility of error regarding the things seen by them. That is why such tests sometimes become necessary. Explaining this to us the Master said, “You cannot give a lasting shape to gold without mixing it with some baser metal.” Even so, bodies and minds like those of incarnations cannot be produced out of pure Sattva, which reveals knowledge, if a little of Rajas and Tamas is not mixed with it. There was a wonderful manifestation of spiritual knowledge in the Master, who was having supernatural visions by the grace of the divine Mother, when he was undergoing Sadhana. On many occasions he doubted the truth of those visions and could accept them fully only after testing them. Was it, therefore, surprising that, he would now test the wonderful visions he had had about Narendra before accepting them as true?

5. How the Master looked upon Narendra

It must be admitted that, of the five modes of the Master’s behaviour towards Narendra mentioned above, three of them, namely, faith blended with love, testing and teaching began simultaneously. We have already given the reader a brief account of the first kind of the Master’s behaviour towards Narendra, or the Master’s faith in and love for him. We shall have to say much more about it later. For, the Master’s life had never before been so intimately united with that of any one of the devotees who had taken refuge in him as with that of Narendra. As soon as he met one of his great disciples, Lord Jesus said, “I will build my spiritual temple on the steady and immovable foundation of the life of this man of firm faith.” Urged by Providence, such a conviction arose in the Master’s mind too, the moment he met Narendra. The Master had the vision that Narendra was his son, his friend, born to carry out his commands and that the lives of Narendra and himself, like those of a pair of lovers, were eternally tied together with an

unbreakable cord of love. But such love is an exalted spiritual love in which the lover gives complete freedom to the beloved, yet keeps the other as one's own from age to age. It is love in which each of the pair feels happy to give his all to the other wanting nothing in return. It is doubtful indeed whether the world has ever witnessed such an episode of selfless love enacted before, as we saw in the lives of the Master and Narendra. We are quite conscious of our incapacity to explain clearly to the reader all the phases of this extraordinary love. We shall, however, give an indication of it in the interests of truth and then discuss the Master's behaviour towards Narendra in detail.

6. The erroneous impression of the ordinary people about Narendra

Just as Narendra saw the Master's purity, renunciation and single-minded devotion and became attracted to him since the first meeting, even so, the Master, it seems to us, was charmed to see his boundless self-confidence and love of truth and made him his own from the first day they met. If we leave aside the Master's Yogic visions about Narendra's greatness and glorious future and try to find out the cause of their wonderful mutual attraction, what we have said before becomes evident. People in general, devoid of insight, regarded Narendra's wonderful self-confidence as arrogance, his boundless vigour as insolence, and his austere love of truth as a feigning or as an example of undeveloped intellect. It is doubtless that they came to that conclusion from seeing his absolute indifference to people's praise, his plain-speaking, his free and unhesitating behaviour regarding all matters and, above all, his disdain to conceal anything for fear of anybody. One of his neighbours, we remember, said to us about Narendra before we had been acquainted with him: "There is a boy in that house; I have never seen a more hopelessly spoiled one than he; having taken his B.A. degree he has become extremely vain, as if the vast world did not count at all with him; he starts singing audaciously in the presence of his father and other superiors, keeping time on kettle drums with his palm and distended fingers; he goes along smoking a cigar in the presence of the elders of the quarter; and so on in all matters." One day, shortly after this,

we went to the Master—perhaps it was our second or third visit to him-—and heard him narrating Narendra's good qualities thus:

7. The author heard Narendra's praise form the Master

Speaking with Ratan, the chief officer of the garden house of Jadunath Mallick, and pointing to us, the Master said, "These boys are good. This boy has passed one and a half examinations (I was preparing for the F.A. examination that year), he is polite and calm; but I have not seen another boy like Narendra—he is as efficient in music, vocal and instrumental, as in the acquisition of knowledge, in conversation as well as in religious matters. He loses normal consciousness in meditation during whole nights. My Narendra is a coin with no alloy whatsoever: ring it and you hear the truest sound. I see other boys somehow pass two or three examinations with the utmost straining. There it ends, they are a spent-up force. But Narendra is not like that; he does everything with the greatest ease; to pass an examination is but a trifle with him. He goes to the Brahmo Samaj also and sings devotional songs there; but he is not like other Brahmos—he is a true knower of Brahman. He sees light when he sits for meditation. Is it for nothing that I love Narendra so much?" We were charmed to hear those words and, desiring to be acquainted with Narendra, asked him, "Sir, where does Narendra live?" The Master replied, "Narendra is the son of Viswanath Datta of Simla, Calcutta." Afterwards, when we returned to Calcutta and made inquiries, we came to know that the young man, so much praised by the Master, was the very person whom our friend, his neighbour, had calumniated so vehemently. Quite astonished, we thought how improper our judgments on others' characters often turn out to be when we base them on the casual activities of those persons!

8. The author's erroneous impression about Narendra at his first meeting with him

It will not be out of place here to mention another incident connected with this topic. One day we had the good fortune to meet Narendranath at the house of a friend, a few months before we heard the Master describing

his good qualities in that manner. That day we only saw him but did not like to have a talk with him on account of an erroneous impression. But the words he spoke that day were so deeply imprinted on our memory that even after the lapse of many decades it seems that we have heard them but yesterday. Before describing them, the circumstances under which we heard those words should be narrated; otherwise one will fail to understand why we carried that wrong impression about Narendranath on that occasion.

9. The author's first meeting with Narendra at a friend's house

The friend in whose house we saw him that day had hired a two-storeyed building in front of Narendra's dwelling house at Gaur Mohan Mukherjee's Lane in the Simla quarter. We had been fellow-pupils in the same school for four or five years. Two years before our friend was to appear for the Entrance examination, he set out for England, but could not proceed farther than Bombay. Failing in his ambition, he became the editor of a newspaper, wrote essays and poems in Bengali and rose to be an author of a few books. He had been married a short time previously. After that event we heard from many sources that he was living an indifferent moral life and that he did not hesitate to earn money by various dishonest means. It was only for the purpose of ascertaining the truth of this that we went without notice to his house that day.

10. The outward behaviour of Narendra at that time

Sending him word through a servant, we were sitting in a room of the outer apartment, when a young man entered the room and lolling against a bolster began humming a Hindi song in an absolutely nonchalant manner, which indicated his familiarity with the owner of the house. The song, as far as we remember, related to Sri Krishna; for, the two words "Kanai" and "flute" distinctly fell on our ears. We could not view the young man with a kind eye inasmuch as his song about the "black one's flute" and his familiarity with our unprincipled friend were associated in our minds with his dress which, though not smacking of up-to-date fashions, was clean, his hair which was well tended and his looks of absent-mindedness, easily

mistaken for coldness. Seeing him behave unabashedly in that manner and smoke tobacco afterwards, ignoring our presence altogether, we happened to receive the impression that he was a faithful follower of our unprincipled friend and that the latter had acquired his evil ways by mixing with such young men. Anyway, we also did not try to get introduced to him as he assumed an attitude of great indifference and continued to be in his own mood even though he noticed us.

11. Narendra's talk on literature with the friend

Our boyhood friend came out shortly after and speaking to us a word or two only though we met each other after a long interval, began delightfully to talk on various subjects with the young man. Though we did not like that indifference of his, we thought it was against etiquette to take leave suddenly and were listening to the conversation on English and Bengali literatures, which our friend, the litterateur, had with the young man. Although, when they began the conversation, they were to a great extent agreed as to the function of high class literature, namely, that it should correctly express human sentiments, there arose a difference of opinion between them regarding the question whether a composition expressing any and every kind of human sentiment should be called literature only because it correctly represents it. Our friend, as far as we can remember, took up the affirmative position, whereas the young man held the contrary opinion. He refuted our friend's position and tried to convince him that no composition, simply by virtue of its expressing a sentiment, good or bad, correctly, could be classed as a piece of high class literature if it did not accord with good taste and establish a high ideal. In support of his own position, the young man mentioned the books of the famous English and Bengali literary men beginning with Chaucer and showed, how each of them gained immortality because he adhered to this high principle. The young man said in conclusion, "Although man feels all kinds of good and bad sentiments, he has always been straining to express some particular ideal in his mind. It is only in the realization and manifestation of that particular ideal that all the difference between man and man exists. Thinking that the enjoyment of sights, tastes, etc., is permanent and real, ordinary men make the realization

of it the aim of their life. They idealize what is apparently real.[1] There is little difference between those people and beasts. High class literature can never be created by men of this type. There is another class of men who, unable to remain satisfied with the realization of the pleasure of enjoying what is seemingly real, feel higher and higher ideals within and are anxious to mould all outward things after that pattern—they want to realize the ideal.[2] It is this class of men only who create real literature. Again, those among them who have recourse to the highest ideal and try to realize it in life, have generally to stand outside worldly life. I have seen the Paramahamsa of Dakshineswar alone to have realized that ideal in life. That is why I have reverence for him."

12. We came to be acquainted with Narendra's greatness through the Master

We were, of course, astonished with the scholarship of the young man and his power of expressing those profound ideas; but we were disappointed to think that there was no agreement between his words and actions inasmuch as we found a close relation existing between him and our friend. We then took leave of our friend. We were charmed to hear from the Master the above-mentioned catalogue of Narendra's good qualities a few months after this event and went to his house to be introduced to him. When we came to know that the young man seen by us before was the Master's much-praised Narendranath our astonishment knew no limit.

13. The Master recognized Narendra from the beginning

Ordinary people, contented with walking along the beaten track, happened very often to regard Narendra as arrogant and insolent and of improper conduct, when they saw his external behaviour; but the Master never fell into that error. From the very start of their acquaintance, he could understand that Narendra's "arrogance and insolence" arose from his great self-confidence, which was the result of the extraordinary mental power hidden within him, that his absolutely free behaviour indicated nothing but the self-control natural to him, and that his indifference to the respect shown

by people arose from the self-satisfaction due to his pure character. He had the conviction that later on the extraordinary nature of Narendra would fully blossom like a lotus of a thousand petals and would be established in its own incomparable glory and greatness. Coming then into collision with the world, scorched by miseries, that arrogance and insolence of his would melt into infinite compassion, his extraordinary self-confidence would re-instil hopes in the broken-hearted and his free behaviour, remaining within the bounds of control in all respects, would point out to others that self-control alone was the path to real Freedom.

14. Knowing that Narendra was a highly fit person, the Master praised him publicly

That is the reason why it is seen that the Master praised Narendra exceedingly; yet he remained unsatisfied, as if he felt the inadequacy of one tongue for the purpose. Though he particularly knew that a weak mind, when it always meets with praise in public, develops egoism which brings ruin, he waived that caution in respect of Narendranath. The reason of his doing so was that he was thoroughly convinced that Narendra's heart and head dwelt in a region too high for that weakness. The reader will comprehend it when we give here a few examples of it:

15. What the Master said about the inherent powers of Narendra

One day the noble-hearted Kesavchandra Sen, Vijay-krishna Goswami and other well-known Brahmo leaders assembled together and were seated with the Master, Young Narendra was also sitting there. The Master went into ecstasy and looked at Kesav and Vijay with a gracious eye. Afterwards, as soon as his eyes fell upon Narendra, a bright picture of his future life got immediately painted on the canvas of the Master's mind and comparing the fully developed lives of Kesav and others with it, he looked very affectionately at Narendra. After the meeting came to an end, he said, "I saw Kesav has become world-famous on account of the abundance of one power, but Narendra has in him eighteen such powers in the fullest measure. The hearts of Kesav and Vijay, I saw again, are brightened by a

light of knowledge like the flame of a lamp; but looking at Narendra I found that the very sun of knowledge had risen in his heart and removed from there even the slightest tinge of Maya and delusion." A weak-minded man devoid of inward vision would have been puffed up with pride and lost himself, had he been so praised by the Master himself. But there arose a perfectly contrary result in Narendra's mind. His mind, possessed of extraordinary inward vision, dived into itself and compared impartially its own condition then with the innumerable good qualities of Kesav and Vijay. Seeing himself unworthy of such praise, Narendra protested strongly against the Master's remark saying, "Sir, 'what are you saying? People will regard you as a madman when they hear this. Ah, What a great difference exists between the world-famous Kesav and the noble-hearted Vijay on the one hand and a mediocre school-boy of no consequence like myself on the other! Please never make such comparisons again." The Master was pleased with him to hear that protest and said affectionately, "What shall I do, my child? Do you think it was I who said so? Mother showed me all that; that is why I said so; Mother has always shown me the truth and never an untruth; that is why I spoke it out."

16. Narendra's protest against those words of the Master

It was not always that the Master could escape Narendra by merely saying that Mother had made him see this or say that. Doubting the truth of all such visions of the Master, the bold, plain-speaking Narendra would very often say, "Who can say that Mother showed you these things and that they are not the fictions of your own brain? If I had had such experiences, I would certainly have taken them as whims of my own brain. Science and philosophy have proved beyond doubt that our eyes, ears and other organs of sense very often deceive us, especially when there is a desire in our mind to see a particular object as endowed with a particular quality. You are affectionate to me and want to see me great in everything; this is perhaps why such visions appear to you."

17. Overwhelmed by Narendra's power of argumentation the Master asked the Mother of the universe

Saying thus, Narendra tried sometimes to explain to the Master with the help of illustrations, the results of the researches and investigations in Western physiology about visions seen by certain classes of persons and to show how they had been proved to be erroneous. When the Master's mind dwelt in higher planes of consciousness, he regarded that boyish attempt of Narendra as an indication of his truthfulness and was all the more pleased with him for that. But when the sincere, childlike mind of the Master resided in the normal plane of consciousness, Narendra's keen arguments overwhelmed it and made it anxious from time to time. He then became perplexed and thought, "Ah! Narendra, truthful in body, mind and speech, is not a person to tell a lie! It is written in the scriptures also that only true ideas and not false ones, arise in the minds of highly truthful persons like Narendra; is there then the possibility of error in my visions? But I tested my visions before in various ways and found that the Mother always showed me what was true and never what was untrue. Moreover, I was assured again and again through words from Her holy mouth; why then does Narendra, to whom truth is his very life, say that my visions are fabrications of my whims? Why does his mind not accept them as true as soon as I tell him of them?"

Thus worried, he would at last place the matter before the divine Mother and be free from anxiety on hearing from Herself the words of assurance. "Why do you give ear to his words? He will accept in a short time all these things as true." The reader will understand what has been said above when we describe here an incident as an example:

18. An example: The Master came to the General Brahmo Samaj to see Narendra

The Brahmos had then become split into two parties on account of the difference of opinion regarding the Cooch-Bihar marriage, and the General Brahmo Samaj had been founded a few years previously. Although Narendra used to pay visits to Kesav from time to time, he regularly attended the sitting of the said Samaj and used to sing devotional songs etc., during its Sunday prayers. Once Narendra could not go to the Master at Dakshineswar for a week or two. For days the Master awaited his coming,

when, at last disappointed, he decided to go himself to Calcutta and see Narendra. Afterwards he remembered that the day being Sunday, Narendra might have gone out to see someone and he might not be able to see him even if he should go to Calcutta. At last he came to the conclusion that he would surely meet him at the General Brahmo Samaj, where he would certainly come to sing devotional songs during the evening prayers. It, no doubt, occurred to his mind that the sudden and unexpected visit of his might be considered a nuisance by the Brahmo devotees. "But why so?" came the thought to him the next moment, "Although I went thus several times to Kesav's Samaj, were they not invariably happy on that account? And did not Vijay, Sivanath and other leaders of the General Brahmo Samaj come often to Dakshineswar?" Thus, at the time of decision, one important fact escaped the notice of the simple-hearted Master. It did not strike him even for a moment that, observing the change in the religious opinions of Kesav and Vijay after they came in contact with him, Sivanath and many other Brahmos of the General Samaj had gradually discontinued their visits to him. It was quite natural for the Master not to have noticed it, for, during the whole of his life he had felt in his heart of hearts the truth that with the ascent of the human mind to higher planes of spiritual consciousness and to the Lord's grace, its previous religious ideas gradually undergo great changes. So, how could the Master understand that the Brahmos, the lovers of and ardent fighters for truth, would now take a different course and put a limit to spiritual experiences?

19. The result of his coming there

It was dusk. The pure hearts of hundreds of Brahmo devotees swollen with emotions soared high wafted by the Mantras, "Brahman is Truth, Knowledge, Infinity" etc.,[1] and lost themselves in the lotus feet of the divine Lord. Prayer and meditation came gradually to an end, when the Acharya addressed the circle of Brahmos from the altar and gave them instruction so that their spiritual love and devotion for God might increase. At this time the Master entered the Brahmo temple in a state of partial consciousness and went forward towards the Acharya, seated on the altar. Many of those present had seen him before. Therefore the news of his

coming did not take long to circulate amongst the congregation. Of those who had not seen him before, some stood up on the floor and some on the benches to see him. Thus there was noise and disorder in the assembly and the Acharya had to bring his sermon to a close. Narendra, who was seated in the circle of the devotional singers, understood the reason of the Master's unexpected visit there and came to him. But, having decided that the Master was the cause of bringing about the aforesaid difference of opinion amongst the Brahmos, such as Vijay and others, the Acharya on the altar and other eminent members of the Samaj remained that day very cold and indifferent to him, abstaining from showing even the ordinary courtesy offered to a casual visitor.

20. They put out the gas lights to break up the crowd

The Master, on his part, came to the altar without looking in any direction and happened to enter into ecstasy. The eagerness of the congregation to see that state of his increased the disorder and confusion, which showed no sign of abating; when it was found that order could not be restored, all the gas lights in the hall were put out in order to break up the unruly assemblage, which, however, made the confusion worse confounded, and all rushed towards the door in the dark to come out.

21. Narendra took the Master out somehow and escorted him to Dakshineswar

When Narendra saw that no one of the Samaj cared to welcome the Master, he was stung to the quick. He now anxiously busied himself in bringing the Master out from the temple in that darkness. Soon after, when his ecstasy came to an end, Naren brought him out through the backdoor of the Samaj with great difficulty, got him into a carriage and escorted him to Dakshineswar. Narendra said, "It is impossible to describe the pain I felt to see the Master thus ill-treated on my account that day. Ah, how much did I scold him for that action of his that day! But he? He neither felt hurt at the humiliation nor gave ear to my words of reproach, supremely satisfied that he had me by his side.

22. Narendra scolded the Master for loving him so much. The divine Mother's assurance to the anxious Master

"Seeing that the Master failed to pay any attention to himself out of his love for me, I did not hesitate on occasions to speak very harsh words to him. I said, 'King Bharata, we are told in the Puranas, thought continually of a deer and became a deer after his death. If that is true, you should beware of the consequences of your thinking much of me and be on your guard.' The Master, simple like a boy, became much perturbed to hear those words of mine and said, 'Right you are; ah, my child, what will happen if that be so? For, I cannot do without seeing you.' Sad and afraid, the Master went to refer the matter to the divine Mother. He returned shortly, beaming with delight and said, 'Away! rascal! I shall never again give ear to your words. Mother said, "You regard him as Narayana Himself; that is why you love him. The day you do not see Narayana in him, you will not even cast a glance at him." ' That day the Master thus swept aside with one word all the objections that I had raised before against his extraordinary love for me."

Footnote

1. This sentence was spoken in English.—Tr.

2. This sentence too was spoken in English.—Tr.

1. *Taittiriya Upanishad,* 2, 1.

CHAPTER VI—SECTION 2
THE EXTRA-ORDINARY RELATION BETWEEN THE MASTER AND NARENDRANATH

1. The Master's words about Narendra's greatness

The Master's keen insight readily detected from the beginning that Narendra's pure mind and heart were always actuated by high ideals, in whatever work they were seen engaged at any time. This was why the daily behaviour of the Master with Narendra had a rare delicacy about it. The Master, who himself observed many rules regarding eating, drinking, sleeping, walking, etc., as well as meditating, counting the beads, etc., in order to encourage his devotees to do likewise, lest their devotion should suffer, used to say unhesitatingly again and again in the presence of all, that no harm would befall Narendra if he did not observe those rules. "Narendra is eternally perfect"; "He is perfect in meditation"; "The fire of knowledge, ever ablaze in him, reduces to ashes all blemishes pertaining to food[1]; his mind, therefore, will not be tarnished or distracted even if he takes whatever he likes at any place and from any person"; "He daily cuts to pieces Maya's bondages with the sword of knowledge; Mahamaya, therefore, fails to bring him under Her control". Ah, how profuse were the Master's expressions of praise for Narendra, which kept us mute with surprise!

2. The Master gave Narendra the food brought by the Marwari devotees

The Marwari devotees came to pay their obeisance to the Master and made presents to him of various articles of food, such as candy, nuts, almonds, various pistachios, etc. The Master himself took nothing of these;

neither did he give them to any one of the devotees that were there with him. He said, “They (the Marwaris) do not know at all how to make gifts without a motive; at the time of offering even a roll of betel to a holy man, they attach to it prayers for the fulfilment of a large number of desires; this does a good deal of harm to one’s devotion when one takes food given by such persons.” The question, therefore, arose what should be done with the things given by them. The Master said, “Go and give them to Narendra. He will not be hurt if he takes them.”

3. Narendra’s devotion would not be affected by eating those things

Narendra one day took his meal in a hotel and came and said to the Master, “Sir, today I have eaten in the hotel what all people call forbidden food.” He knew that Narendra said so, not because he wanted to get credit for his act, but in order that the Master might be fore-warned, if, on the score of Narendra’s act, he had any objection to touch him or use the utensils like water-pots, cups, etc., that were there in his room. Out came the reply from the Master, “No blemish will touch you on that account; if anyone eats pork and beef but keeps his mind fixed on the divine Lord, it is like taking the sacred Havishya; on the other hand, if anyone eats greens and vegetables but is immersed in worldly desires, it is not in any respect better than eating pork and beef. I don’t consider it wrong on your part — this taking of forbidden food; but had any one of them (pointing to all others) come and told me so, I could not have even touched him.”

4. Narendra made progress on account to the Master’s love for him and surrendered himself to him

It is almost impossible to explain exactly to the reader the love, praise and liberty in all matters that Narendra had from the Master since they met for the first time. It is doubtful whether a parallel to this behaviour in which the teacher leads a large-minded disciple with so much reverence for his internal powers, can be found anywhere in the whole spiritual history of the world. The Master could not remain satisfied without speaking out all his innermost thoughts to Narendra; he wished to consult him on all matters.

He made those persons who came to him argue against him and thus tested the strength of their faith and intellect. He never requested him to accept anything as true without thoroughly testing it. This behaviour of the Master, it is superfluous to say, increased a hundredfold in a very short time Narendra's devotion, reverence and self-confidence, his capacity for personal endeavour and love of truth. This infinite confidence and love of the Master surrounded Narendra on all sides like an impregnable wall and protected him from all kinds of temptations and mean conduct without his knowledge, thus letting him indulge in his natural love of unbounded freedom. Narendra's love for the Master grew so deep and intense that he surrendered himself to him for all eternity within a year of his first meeting him. But did he then know how far the current of the Master's selfless love carried him forward towards the goal of life? Perhaps not. Blissfully filled and contented as his heart was with a heavenly joy never felt before, Narendra was yet to know how unique and unattainable a thing it was — a thing coveted even by the gods. For, with his experience of the extremely selfish and hard-hearted world, he had no object with which to compare this rare love. It will not be out of place here to give a few examples to make this clear to the reader.

5. The Master made Sri M. argue with Narendra

Sri M., the author of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* had the good fortune of meeting the Master at Dakshineswar in the month of March of the year 1882, a few months after Narendra had come to him. He himself has recorded in that book how he had the opportunity of coming to the Master a few times at short intervals as he was then living at Baranagar and how a few ironical remarks of the Master removed his pride of learning and converted him for ever into a humble scholar. Narendra said, "One day at that time I spent a night with the Master at Dakshineswar. I was sitting quiet for some time under the Panchavati, when the Master suddenly came there and catching hold of my hand, said smiling, 'Your intellect and learning will be examined today. You have passed two and a half examinations only; a teacher who has passed three and a half[1] has come today. Come, let me see how you fare in conversation with him.' Willy-nilly, I had to go with the

Master. When I reached his room and was introduced to M., I began to talk with him on various subjects. Having thus engaged us in a talk the Master sat silent and went on listening to our words and observing us. Afterwards, when Sri M. took leave and went away, he said, 'What matters it, even if he has passed those examinations? The teacher is womanish in character—shy. He cannot talk with emphasis.' Thus pitting me against others, the Master enjoyed the fun."

6. Kedarnath Chattopadhyaya, the devotee

Kedarnath Chattopadhyaya was one of the lay devotees of the Master. He, it seems, used to visit the Master for some time before Narendra came to Dakshineswar. As he was employed at Dacca in East Bengal, he could not often come to the Master except during vacations, like that of the autumn worship of the Mother of the universe. Kedar was a devotee and Sadhaka and engaged himself in the practice of the spiritual moods and attitudes described in the Vaishnava scriptures. He shed tears when he heard devotional songs etc. The Master, therefore, praised him before all. Seeing Kedar's faith and devotion, many people of Dacca developed great respect and reverence for him. Many, again, tried to mould their spiritual lives according to his instructions. When too many people began to come to the Master, he sometimes got tired of discussing religious topics with all; and we are told, one day, when he was in ecstasy, he prayed to the divine Mother, "Mother, I cannot talk so much; give a little power to Kedar, Ram, Girish and Vijay[1], so that people may go to them first, learn a little, and at last come here (to me) to have their spiritual awakening in a word or two." But this was long afterwards.

7. Kedar's power of reasoning. He was introduced to Narendra

Taking leave for some time from his duties, Kedar came to Calcutta and had the opportunity of visiting the Master now and then. Having that Sadhaka and devotee by his side, the Master was delighted and started talking with him on religious topics and introduced other devotees to him. One day Narendra came to the Master during that period and saw Kedar

with him. While he was singing devotional songs at the Master's request, Narendra observed Kedar entering into ecstasy. Afterwards, the Master set Narendra to reason with Kedar. Kedar was a good debater in his own way, and used sarcastic words now and then to point out the unreasonableness of the words of the opponent. The words with which he silenced his opponent one day were much liked by the Master. If any one raised similar questions before him (the Master), he very often said that Kedar had given such and such a reply to such a question. That day the opponent raised the question, "If God is actually merciful, why has He created so much pain and misery, suppression and oppression? Why do thousands of people die of starvation during famines from time to time?" Kedar replied, "I was unfortunately not invited by the Lord to attend the meeting in which He, in spite of His being merciful, decided to keep going pain and misery, tyranny and oppression in His creation. How then, can I know the reason?" But Kedar had to be silenced that day in the presence of all by Narendra's keen intellect.

8. Asked by the Master, Narendra gave his own opinion about Kedar

The Master asked Narendra after Kedar left, "Well, how did you find him? Have you noticed his great devotion to the Lord? He shed tears at the very mention of the Lord's name. One whose eyes pour forth streams of tears at the name of Hari, is a person liberated in life; Kedar is splendid — isn't he?" The immaculate and vigorous Narendra hated from the bottom of his heart those persons who, having a male body, assumed a womanish attitude, be it for the sake of religion or for any other reason. That a man should approach God and find relief in weeping instead of confirming his own determination and perseverance, always appeared to him to be an insult to his manliness. Although entirely dependent on God, a man, he opined, should always remain a man and should surrender himself to Him like a man. Therefore, unable to approve whole-heartedly those words of the Master, he said, "But, sir, how can I know it? You know people's nature, it is for you to say it. Otherwise, simply by seeing a man weeping and wailing, one can never know if he is good or bad. If a man gazes at a point intensely for some time, the lachrymal ducts and glands are strained and tears flow. Again, most of those who weep singing or listening to songs

describing Srimati's separation from Sri Krishna, do so, there is no doubt, by remembering their own separation from their wives or by ideally placing themselves in that condition. People like me, perfectly unacquainted with that condition, will not easily feel inclined like others to weep even when listening to Mathur-kirtan[1], noted for its pathos." Thus, when asked, Narendra always gave his independent opinions fearlessly to the Master on matters he knew to be true. The Master too was always pleased with this, and was never displeased. For, the Master who knew people's hearts, certainly felt that Narendra, to whom truth was life, had not on his conscience the slightest burden of a trifling fib, or, as the Master would himself put it, "He had kept the inner chamber of his mind clear of dubious expressions."

9. Narendra scolded Rakhal for worshipping God with form. Rakhal was afraid. They were reconciled by the Master

Narendra had joined the Brahmo Samaj shortly before he met the Master. He had then signed the pledge of the Brahmo Samaj to the effect that he would believe in the only God who is one and formless, and worship, and meditate on Him alone. But the idea of becoming a ritualistic Brahmo by adopting the social usages and customs prevalent in the Samaj, never crossed his mind. Rakhal had been known to Narendra before and used to spend much time with him. It was not a matter of surprise that, charmed with the loving behaviour of Narendra, Rakhal who possessed the soft gentle nature of a child reposed trust in him and was regulated in all matters by his strong will-power. Therefore, advised by Narendra, he also signed that pledge of the Brahmo Samaj then. Rakhal met the Master shortly afterwards, and, instructed by him, the dormant love for the worship of God with forms was once more awakened in Rakhal's heart. Narendra began visiting the Master a few months later and was highly pleased to see Rakhal there. Rakhal, he found a few days afterwards, went with the Master to the temple and bowed down to the images of the deities. The truthful Narendra was chagrined at that, and reminding Rakhal of his former pledge, reproved him thus: "You have been guilty of false conduct inasmuch as you have signed the pledge of the Brahmo Samaj and yet go to the temple and bow

down to the deities." The gentle-natured Rakhal remained silent when his friend spoke those words and was afraid and hesitant to meet him since then. Knowing afterwards the reason why Rakhal behaved in that manner, the Master explained the matter in sweet words and convincingly to Narendra and said to him affectionately, "Look here, don't blame Rakhal any more; he shrinks from you; he has now faith in God with form; so, what can he do? Can every one have the conception of the formless God from the very beginning?" Narendra also desisted from blaming Rakhal since then.

10. The Master attempted to lead Narendra to the doctrine of non-dualism. Narendra's protests

The Master understood that Narendra was a highly qualified person in the domain of spirituality and tried to infuse into him the belief in the truth of non-dualism from the very first day he met him. He used to give him books like the *Ashtavakra Samhita* to read as soon as he came to Dakshineswar. But books like these then appeared to be blasphemous and atheistic in the eyes of Narendra, engaged in the dualistic mode of worship of the formless Brahman with attributes. As soon as he had read a little at the request of the Master, he blurted out, "What is the difference between this and atheism? Should the created Jiva think of himself as the Creator? What can be more sinful than this? What ideas can be more unreasonable than saying, 'I am God, you are God, all things that are born and die are God.' The brains of the Rishis and Munis, the authors of such books, must have been deranged; how otherwise, could they have written such things?" The Master smiled to hear these words of the plain-speaking Narendra, but, instead of suddenly attacking his spiritual attitude, he said, "You may not accept them now; but why do you condemn the Munis and Rishis because of that? And why do you put a limit to the nature of God? Go on calling on Him who is Truth itself and then believe that to be His true nature in which He will reveal Himself to you." But Narendra did not give ear to these words of the Master. For, whatever was not established by reason then appeared to him to be untrue and it was his nature to stand against all kinds of untruth. He, therefore, did not hesitate to adduce reasons against the doctrine of non-

dualism to many besides the Master and use even sarcastic words from time to time.

11. Pratapchandra Hazra

A person named Pratapchandra Hazra used to live in the garden at Dakshineswar at that time. Pratap's worldly circumstances were not now affluent as before. Therefore, in spite of his attempts at spiritual attainments, a desire for money very often got the upper hand in his mind. But keeping it secret to himself he would speak of high selfless service to the Lord and try to gain praise thereby. Calculation of loss and gain at every step became so natural to him that even at the time of practising religion he could not forgo it; and the idea of attaining some miraculous power by means of Japa, austerities, etc., with which he could satisfy his desire for money, seemed sometimes to creep into his mind. The Master knew that attitude of his mind from the very first day and advised him to call on God giving up all ulterior motives. But the weak-minded Hazra did not only disobey his advice, but, under the urge of pride, delusion and self-interest, preached, whenever he had leisure, to those who came to see the Master, that he too was not a lesser Sadhu. But along with this, he seemed to have in his mind a little real desire of becoming honest. This was evident from the fact that although the Master knew of this conduct of his and although he sometimes scolded him sharply for it, he did not drive him away from there once for all. But he warned some of us against mixing much with him, saying, "That fellow, Hazra, has a great calculating mind; don't give ear to him."

12. Narendra was pleased with Hazra's intellectual capacity

With other good and bad qualities, Hazra had a sceptical temperament. Compared with other persons of similar education, he was quite intelligent. Therefore, he could understand a little of the discussion on the doctrines of the Western agnostic philosophers carried on by English-educated persons like Narendra. The intelligent Narendra was, therefore, pleased with him and spent at his convenience an hour or two in conversation with Hazra

whenever he came to Dakshineswar. Hazra, of course, had to bend his head before Narendra's keen intellect. He listened with great attention to Narendra's words and sometimes prepared a smoke for him. Seeing that attitude of Narendra towards Hazra, many of us said jokingly, "Mr. Hazra is Narendra's 'ferend' (friend)."

13. How the Master behaved during Narendra's visits to Dakshineswar

The Master happened very often to go into ecstasy as soon as he saw Narendra come to Dakshineswar. Afterwards, when he regained partial consciousness, he quite joyfully used to have long spiritual talks with him. At those times he tried through words and deeds to infuse high spiritual truths into his mind. Now and then he would feel like hearing devotional songs but as soon as he heard the very sweet voice of Narendra, he would enter into ecstasy once more. But Narendra's songs would not stop on that account. He became absorbed and went on singing songs, one after another, for a few hours. When the Master regained partial consciousness, he sometimes requested Narendra to sing a particular song. But he would not be fully satisfied till at last he had heard from Narendra the song, "Thou art whatever there is." Afterwards some time was spent in talking about various hidden truths of the non-dual doctrine, such as the difference between Jiva and Isvara, the real nature of Jiva and Brahman and so on and so forth. Thus there was a strong surge of bliss whenever Narendra came to Dakshineswar.

14. Narendra joined Hazra in ridiculing the truth of non-dualism. The Master touched Narendra in a mood of spiritual inebriation

One day the Master told Narendra many things indicating the oneness of Jiva and Brahman of the non-dual philosophy. Narendra heard those words, undoubtedly with attention, but could not comprehend them and went to Hazra at the end of the Master's talk. Smoking and discussing those things again with Hazra, he said, "Can it ever be possible that the water-pot is God, the cup is God, whatever we see and all of us are God?" Hazra also joined Narendra in ridiculing the idea and both of them burst into laughter. The Master was till then in the state of partial consciousness. Hearing

Narendra laugh, he came out of his room like a boy with his cloth in his arm-pit and, coming to them smiling, said affectionately, “What are you both talking about?” He then touched Narendra and went into ecstasy.

15. As a result, Narendra had a wonderful experience

Narendra said to us afterwards, “There was a complete revolution in the state of my mind in a moment at the wonderful touch of the Master. I was aghast to see actually that there was nothing in the whole universe except God. But I remained silent in spite of seeing it, wondering how long that state would last. But that inebriation did not at all diminish that day. I returned home; it was all the same there; it seemed to me that all that I saw was He. I sat for my meal when I saw that all—food, plate, the one who was serving as well as I myself—were nothing but He. I took a mouthful or two and sat quiet. My mother’s affectionate words—‘Why do you sit quiet; why don’t you eat?’—brought me to consciousness and I began eating again. Thus, I had that experience at the time of eating or drinking, sitting or lying, going to the college or taking a stroll. I was always overwhelmed with a sort of indescribable intoxication. When I walked along the streets and saw a carriage coming along before me, I did not feel inclined, as at other times, to move away lest it should collide with me. For, I thought, ‘I am also that and nothing but that.’ My hands and feet always remained insensible at that time. I felt no satisfaction whatever when I took my food. It seemed to me as if someone else was eating the meal. Sometimes I lay down while eating and got up in a short time to continue eating. On some days I thus ate much more than the usual quantity of food. But that did not bring about any disease. My mother was afraid and said, ‘You, I find, are internally suffering from a terrible disease.’ Again she sometimes said, ‘He will live no more.’ When that overwhelming intoxication diminished a little, the world appeared to me to be a dream. Going for a walk on the bank of the Hedua tank, I knocked my head against the iron railings round it to see whether what I saw were dream-rails or actual ones. On account of the insensibility of my hands and feet I was afraid that I might be going to have paralysis. I could not escape that terrible intoxicating mood and overwhelming condition for some time. When I came to the normal state, I

thought that that was the indication of non-dual knowledge. So what is written in the scriptures about it is by no means untrue. Since then I could never doubt the truth of non-duality."

16. The result of the author's conversation with Narendra on one occasion

On another occasion we heard of another wonderful event also from Narendra. He mentioned it to us in the winter of 1884 when we had become very familiar with him. But we infer that the event occurred at this time. Therefore we narrate it to the reader here. We remember that we went to Narendra's house at Gaur Mohan Mukherjee's Street in Simla, a little before midday on that occasion and were with him till eleven at night. Swami Ramakrishnananda also was with us that day. The heavenly attraction that we felt for Narendra since we had first met one another, became multiplied a thousand times that day by the dispensation of Providence. The only opinion that we entertained about the Master before was that he was a perfected man, that is, a person who had known God. But that day the words of Narendra about the Master penetrated into our hearts and shed a new light on our minds. The extraordinary events, like those recorded in the biographies of great souls, the teachers of the world, such as the holy and glorious Jesus, Chaitanya and others, which we had read about and had been disbelieving so long, were, we understood that day, taking place daily in the Master's life. He granted devotion to those who had taken refuge in him, by a touch or by untying at will the knots of their past impressions. He made them enter into ecstasy and realize divine Bliss. Or he changed the course of their lives into spiritual channels in such a way that the realization of God followed very soon and they were blessed for all eternity. Narendra, we remember, took us for a walk at dusk that day to the banks of the Hedua tank while relating the divine experiences he had had in his life by the grace of the Master. Immersed in his self, he remained silent for some time and at last there burst out in a song sung in his charming voice the wonderful bliss of his heart:

"Gora Ray distributes the wealth of love.
Nitai Chand calls 'come, come';

Come, O you, who long to have it.
Jarfuls of love are being poured out,
Yet it does not get exhausted.
Santipur is being flooded and
Nadia is swept off.
Nadia is swept off by the current of Gora's love."

17. Narendra mentioned a wonderful incident

The song came to an end. In a soliloquy, as it were, Narendra said gently, "He is actually distributing love. Gora Ray is bestowing love, devotion, divine knowledge, liberation and whatever else one may desire, on whomsoever he likes. Oh, the wonderful power! (He sat silent and motionless for a while.) I was lying on my bed at night with the door of my room bolted from within, when he suddenly attracted me and took me—the one that lives within this body—to Dakshineswar. Giving a great deal of instruction to me and talking on various subjects, he allowed me to return. He can do anything he likes; this Gora Ray of Dakshineswar can do anything."

18. Entering the author's house Narendra had a unique experience

The darkness of dusk had intensified into a jet-black night. We could not see each other; nor was it necessary. For, the glowing mass of Narendra's spiritual emotion had entered deep into our heart and produced such an intoxication in our mind that even its frame, the body, was actually reeling and the real world existing so long had, as it were, receded to a realm of dream. Moreover, the truth that under the impulse of pure, unalloyed grace the infinite God appears to be finite as a human being, sets in motion the wheel of religion destroying the bondage of the past impressions of thousands of Jivas—the truth which, according to the majority of the people of the world, is but a fib of the imagination—then stood revealed to us in its living, blazing form. How time slid away we did not know. But suddenly we heard the clock strike nine. I was reluctantly thinking of taking leave of Narendra, when he said, "Come, let us go. I'll accompany you for a short

distance.” As we were going, similar interesting topics were started and we became soon absorbed in them. It occurred to us when we reached home near Champatala, that it was foolish on our part to have let Narendra come so far. Therefore, inviting him to the house, we asked him to take a little refreshment, which done, we accompanied him up to his house, and returned. I remember distinctly another incident of that day. As soon as he entered our house, Narendra stood motionless saying, “I feel I have seen this house before. I find everything here is all known to me; all the rooms and the ways leading to them are all fully known to me. Oh, how strange and wonderful!” The reader might remember that we described before in another place that Narendra had such experiences in his life from time to time and what he said about the cause of such phenomena. So we do not repeat them here.

Footnote

1. The Hindu believes that each article of food that he takes builds not only his physical being, but also his moral and spiritual being, by increasing or decreasing the lethargy, energy and keenness of the mind and the sense-organs—Tr.

1. Narendra was then studying for his B.A. examination and Sri M. had passed that examination and was studying law (B.L.). The Master put these facts in that way.

1. Kedarnath Chattopadhyaya, Ramchandra Datta, Girishchandra Gosh and Vijaykrishna Goswami.

1. Describing the intense pang of separation of the Gopis of Vrindavan at the departure of Krishna to Mathura.—Tr.

CHAPTER VII
THE MASTER'S METHOD OF TESTING AND NARENDRANATH

We have told the reader elsewhere that, finding uncommon characteristics in Narendra, the Master found him to be a person highly qualified for spiritual attainments and bound him to him by his extraordinary selfless love, ever since he met him first. He nevertheless, now and then, examined him, even as he proceeded with educating him in spiritual matters. It is necessary, therefore, to give here a short account of his modes and ways of testing Narendranath.

1. The Master's peculiar way of testing the nature of people

When the Brahmo Samaj was about to be split over the difference of opinion regarding the "Cooch-Bihar marriage", the Master said to Kesav, "You take anybody and everybody without examining him in order to add to the number of your society. Is it surprising, therefore, that it will dissolve? I do not accept anyone without examining him thoroughly." Astonishing indeed are the various ways through which the Master used to examine the devotees who came to him, with or without their knowledge, before he accepted them. One wonders how and whence he who had passed himself off as an illiterate person acquired the mastery of those unseen and unheard of methods. Naturally the question crops up: "Was it the self-revelation in this life of knowledge acquired in his previous lives? Or was it the result of his acquiring super-sensuous vision and all-knowingness by dint of his Sadhana like those of the seers of old, or, again, was it the manifestation of that knowledge due to his prerogative of being an incarnation of God, of which he told his devotees of the inner circle?" Although these queries naturally arise in our minds, we are not now going

to press them to a solution. We are merely concerned with giving as far as possible an accurate description of the series of events, and leave it to the reader to come to his own conclusion regarding them.

2. The ordinary method of examination

The reader will comprehend the extraordinary nature of the ways and means which the Master adopted to acquaint himself with the nature of people when we mention a few incidents concerning it. But before trying to understand them, he must know certain other things regarding those ways and means. As soon as someone came to him, the Master, we saw, looked at that person in a peculiar way. If his mind was attracted towards that person when he did so, he talked to him on religion in a general way and asked him to see him from time to time. As time passed and as the person repeated his visits to him, he engaged himself in coming to a sure conclusion regarding the dormant spiritual tendencies in him by observing minutely, without his knowledge, the form of the limbs of his body, his mental tendencies, the intensity of his desire for enjoyment, especially his attachment to lust and gold, as also how far his mind had been or was being attracted towards him. He gathered these data by observing how he talked, acted and behaved. This observation was so keen and thorough that it took him but a few days to have a perfect knowledge of the character of that person. Afterwards, if it were at all necessary to know anything deeply hidden in the person's mind, the Master knew it with the help of his subtle Yogic insight. One day he said to us regarding this, "When I am alone during the last hours of the night, I am engaged in thinking of your good. Mother reveals everything about you to me—how far each one of you has progressed, what blocks the further progress of any one to spirituality and so on." Let not the reader think from these words of the Master that his Yogic eyes opened during those hours only. It is clear from his words spoken at other times, that he could at will ascend to higher planes of consciousness and attain that vision at any time. Take for example his words, "Just as one looking at a glass case sees all the things within it, so, as soon as I look at a person, I see all—his thoughts, past impressions, etc."

3. Whenever the Master met for the first time a person highly qualified for a particular spiritual mood, he would have ecstasy in that mood

This was the method which the Master generally adopted when he tried to acquaint himself with the nature of the ordinary devotees. From this, however he deviated more or less in the case of especial devotees of the inner circle. It was by the dispensation of Providence that he had his first meeting with them while he was in higher planes of consciousness. We have said elsewhere in this book, that the body and mind of the Master became, by the extraordinary power of his Sadhana, a wonderful instrument wherewith he could conserve spiritual powers in himself and know of their existence in others. This was literally true. As soon as the Master was a person with a particular spiritual mood in his mind, his own mind, we always noticed, would be coloured by that mood under some divine impulse. And no sooner had a person come to him having ascended to a particular plane in the spiritual realm, than his own mind would naturally ascend to that plane where the other's was and reveal to him the ideas of that person's mind. The reader will understand what we mean, if he recalls the Master's experiences, as previously mentioned, when Narendra visited him first.

4. The four methods of his testing people

This did not, however, preclude him from applying the ordinary methods, adopted to know the character of the people in general, in the case of his devotees of the inner circle. When he dwelt in the normal plane of consciousness, he observed their talk and behaviour as well as those of other devotees, not even excepting Narendra; not until then could he be free from anxiety. The matter being so important, the reader must be made acquainted with it fully. We can divide the ways and means adopted by the Master to examine his devotees into four main divisions. As we have already stated their broad principles, we may now explain them to the reader with the help of illustrations:

Firstly, the Master ascertained the strong past impressions of a newcomer by observing his physical characteristics.

5. Ascertaining the mental impressions from physiognomy

In the process of our thoughts being transformed into actions, they leave especial marks in particular parts of our brain and body. Modern physiology and psychology have proved a great deal of this fact and have confirmed our belief. The Vedas and other scriptures, however, have been telling us this for a long time past. The Vedas, the Smritis, the Puranas, the Darsanas and all other scriptures of the Hindus, have unanimously proclaimed that "mind creates this body". With the current of a man's thoughts moving constantly in a good or bad channel, his body changes and assumes forms helpful to the fulfilment of those thoughts. Many proverbs are current amongst us regarding the ascertainment of the character of people by the observation of the formation of their bodies and limbs. It has been regarded up till now to be absolutely necessary to examine the body as a whole and all its limbs, the form of the hands and feet etc., of the bride and the disciple at the time of marriage and initiation respectively.

6. The wonderful knowledge of the Master in this respect

It was, therefore, not surprising that the Master, a believer in all the Sastras, should observe the form of the bodies and limbs of his own disciples. But occasionally he used to say so many things in the course of conversation about it to us that we wondered whence he could get so much information. We sometimes asked ourselves whether there was any big book on the subject coming down from ancient times, reading or hearing which he had come to know all these things. But as we had not so far seen or heard of such a book, the idea had to be given up as having no basis. So we went on listening to him with astonishment as he narrated how the formation of each limb and sense-organ of the body of men and women resembled a particular thing of our daily knowledge and what good and bad effects were produced by such formations. Take, for example, the eyes of a person; speaking of them he would say that, in the case of some, they were like the petals of a lotus, in the case of others like the eyes of a bull and in the case of still others like those of Yogis. "A person having his eyes like the petals of a lotus has good thoughts in him; one whose eyes are like those of a bull has lust predominant in him; the Yogi's eyes have an upward look

and are reddish and the eyes like those of gods are not very large but long, reaching very near the ears. Those who are in the habit of looking through the corners of their eyes now and then at the time of conversation, are more intelligent than ordinary people." Or he would start the topic of the nature of the general formation of people's bodies and say, "A person of devotion has a soft body by nature and the joints of his arms and legs are not thick-set (that is, can be easily turned round); even if his body is thin, the bones, muscles, etc., in it are placed in such a way that the joints do not seem very angular." In order to ascertain whether a person's intelligence tends towards good or evil, the Master would hold that person's forearm (from the elbow to the fingers) in his own hand and ask him to hold it loose. He would then feel its weight. If it was felt lighter than that of people in general, he regarded him as a person of beneficent intelligence. The Master, we mentioned before, thus caught hold of the forearm of Swami Premananda[1] and weighed it on the day of his first visit to Dakshineswar. But as he did not say why the Master did so, we also did not mention there the purpose for which it was done. Our conclusion, however, was borne out by an incident on another occasion. We mention it below.

7. Ascertaining the virtuous or vicious nature of the intellect of a man by the weight of his forearm

When the Master was staying in the garden at Kasipur, one day, the author's younger brother[1] came there to see him. The Master was highly pleased to see him. He made him sit beside himself, made many kind enquiries and gave him various religious instructions. When the author came there, the Master asked him, "Is the boy your brother?" When the author said "yes", the Master continued, "He is a nice boy, a little more intelligent than you. Let me see whether his intelligence tends towards good or evil." Saying so, he immediately held in his hand the said part of the boy's right arm, weighed it and made the remark, "beneficent intelligence". Afterwards he asked the author affectionately once more, "Shall I attract him too? (that is, shall I make his mind turn away from worldly life towards God?) What do you say?" "It will be good, Sir," replied the author, "please do so." The Master thought a little and said, "No; let me not do it; I have

taken one, and if I take another now, your parents, especially your mother, will be much pained. I have offended many Saktis[2] during my life; no more of it now." Saying so, the Master gave him religious instructions and some refreshments and bade him good-bye.

8. The difference in the daily natural actions of the body indicates the difference in past impression

The Master said that, like the formation of the limbs etc., sleep, calls of nature and other ordinary physical actions of persons possessed of different past impressions differed widely. Therefore, experienced people, he used to say, found clues in these acts also for ascertaining the character of men; for example, he said, during sleep all did not breathe in the same way; a worldly man did it in one way and an all-renouncing one did it in a different way; at the time of answering calls of nature the former had his stream of urine deflected to the left, while the latter to the right; that the faeces of a Yogi were not touched by hogs and so on.

9. Hanuman Singh, the gate-keeper

The Master described to us an event pertaining to this. A man named Hanuman Singh was appointed to guard the Dakshineswar temple during Mathur Babu's time. Although he was one of the several gate-keepers, Hanuman Singh enjoyed greater respect; for, not only was he a well-known wrestler but also a single-minded devout aspirant. Another wrestler came to Dakshineswar in order to defeat Hanuman Singh (who was a worshipper of Mahavira) and to take his place. Hanuman Singh saw his sturdy body, physical strength, etc., but he did not hesitate to accept the challenge. A day was fixed and persons like Mathur Babu were appointed judges to decide which of them was superior.

The wrestler, the new-comer, began to eat heaps of nutritious food and practise physical exercise for about a week before the day of wrestling. On the contrary, Hanuman Singh took his bath in the morning, repeated as usual the Mantra of his chosen Ideal during the whole of the day and took one meal a day in the evening. Everyone thought that Hanuman had got

frightened and had given up hopes of success. The Master loved him and, therefore, asked him the day before the competition, "You have not prepared your physique by practising bodily exercise and eating nutritious food; do you think you will succeed in the competition with the new man?" Hanuman bowed down to him with devotion and said, " I'll certainly win if your grace is bestowed on me; it is not by eating a heap of food that strength comes to the body; the food must be digested. I secretly saw the faeces of the other wrestler and found that he was eating food beyond his power of digestion." The Master said that Hanuman Singh actually defeated that man in wrestling on the day of the competition.

10. Ascertaining whether a woman is a Vidya Sakti or an Avidya Sakti by observing her actions and the formation of her limbs

The Master said many things about the formation of the limbs of women's bodies as well as those of men. Observing these, he specified some women as Vidya Saktis, in other words, as those helping men in their Godward progress, and others as Avidya Saktis, that is, those who drag men towards worldliness. He said, "The Vidya Saktis take a small quantity of food, require a little sleep and have naturally little attachment to the senses; their hearts are especially filled with joy to hear their husbands talk of God; they themselves talk of the Lord, and give their husbands a high spiritual impulse, always protecting them from mean inclinations and actions and assisting them in all matters, so that they may be blessed by realizing God at last. The nature and actions of the Avidya Saktis, on the other hand, are of quite an opposite kind. They are seen to hanker after many physical comforts, such as food, sleep, etc., and their chief aim is to prevent their husbands from paying attention to anything except contributing to their own happiness; if their husbands speak to them about spiritual things, they become displeased and annoyed." The Master sometimes said that the external form of that particular sense-organ, with the help of which women acquire the prerogative of motherhood, indicates their inward attachment to sensual enjoyment. He also said that its forms varied. Some of its forms indicated a very small amount of beastliness. Again, he said that those

whose buttocks bulge out like the hind parts of black ants have that inclination to an inordinate degree.

11. What the Master said about Narendra's physical characteristics

Thus, there is no limit to what the Master told us about ascertaining human character by physiognomical observations. He regarded it as one of the means of knowing the character of people and he examined Narendra and all other devotees with its help. On thus examining Narendra, he was pleased and said to him one day, "All the parts of your body have good characteristics. The only defect is, that you breathe a little heavily when asleep. Yogis say that one breathing so heavily is short-lived."

12. Ascertaining natural tendencies by observing mental reactions revealed in trifling activities and by observing the degree of attachment to lust and gold revealed in those activities

Secondly and thirdly, the observation of mental states revealed by ordinary actions and that of the attachment to lust and gold so revealed were regarded by the Master as the second and third means of knowing the nature of a particular person. The Master used to observe a new-comer silently for some time; then, when he had decided to take him into his circle, he would try to make him give up those defects by giving him various instructions and a gentle scolding, if necessary. Again, along with the decision of choosing the man, he would settle whether he would mould his life as a monk or a lay disciple and would impart instruction accordingly from the beginning. The Master, therefore, asked every visitor if he was married, if the financial condition of the family was sufficient for providing plain living and if there was any near relation who could take up the responsibility of maintaining his family if he renounced the world.

13. The Master's impression about boys

The Master was always seen to have a great compassion for students of schools and colleges. He said, "Their minds have not yet been distracted by

wife, children, fame, etc. (If rightly educated) they could apply their whole mind to God." He, therefore, made a great effort to impart spiritual ideas to them. He expressed that opinion with the help of various illustrations. He said, "The mind is like a bundle of grains of mustard seed; once scattered, it becomes almost impossible to collect them together", "Once the coloured ring appears round the neck, it is very difficult to teach the parrot to pronounce 'Radhakrishna'," "Footprints of cows on unburnt tiles can easily be effaced but when the tiles are burnt, those marks cannot be obliterated", and so on. He, therefore, put questions particularly to the students of schools and colleges, inexperienced in worldly life, and gathered whether the natural tendency of their minds was towards worldly enjoyment or renunciation and, if he thought them fit, guided them on the latter path.

14. He observed every action of the devotees who came to him

The Master did not stop simply with making out the mental state of a particular person by observing all his actions minutely; but he would investigate closely and see how simple and truthful he was, how far he translated into action what he expressed in words, whether he performed every action with proper discrimination, how and how far he was convinced of the truth of what was taught and so on. Here are a few examples:

15. Examples

A boy had been frequenting Dakshineswar for a few days, when one day the Master asked him suddenly, "Why don't you get married?" "Sir," replied he, "my mind has not yet come under my control; if I am married now, I shall get attached to my wife and that will destroy my power of discrimination between what is beneficial and what is not. If I can ever conquer lust, I shall get married." The Master knew from this that, although there was attachment within, the mind of the boy had been attracted towards the path of renunciation and said smiling, "There will be no necessity for marriage when you conquer lust."

Talking to a boy one day at Dakshineswar on various topics, he said, "Will you please tell me what it is: I can by no means keep a piece of cloth

always on my loins—it does not remain there; I don't even know when it has fallen off; I, a man so advanced in age, go about naked. But, nevertheless, I don't feel my nakedness. Formerly I had no consciousness at all of who saw me in that state. Knowing that those who see me feel shame, I now keep a cloth on my lap. Can you stand (naked) like me in the presence of people?" The boy replied, "Sir, I am not sure, but I can put off my cloth if you ask me to." He said, "Just let me see; go round the courtyard of the temple with your cloth tied round your head like a turban." The boy said, "I cannot do that but I can do so before you only." The Master heard it and said, "Many others also say so. They say, 'We don't feel shame in putting off the wearing-cloth in your presence but feel it before others'."

16. High tide in the Ganga

We remember another event in this connection. It was a night flooded with moonlight—the second or the third night of the dark fortnight. The flood-tide came to the Ganga shortly after we went to bed. The Master left his bed and ran to the embankment, calling everyone, "Come you all to see the tide." He danced like a boy to see the calm white water of the river convert itself into high waves crested with foam, come like one mad with a terrible force and upward surge and leap upon the embankment. We were drowsy when the Master called us. We were a little late in following him for we had to get up and take care of our clothes. Therefore, scarcely had we reached the embankment, when the tide passed away. Some of us saw a little of it while others saw nothing at all. The Master was so long happy by himself. When the tide went away he looked at us and said, "Well, how did you witness the tide?" Hearing that the tide went away when we were putting on our cloth, he said, "Ah, fools, will the tide wait for you to put on your cloth? Why did you not leave your cloth behind like me?"

17. One should know that the aim of life is God realization and nothing else and should orientate one's activities towards that

In answer to the Master's questions such as, "Do you wish to marry?", "Will you serve?", some of us said, "Sir, I don't wish to marry but I shall

have to take service." But the answer seemed to the Master, who was a great lover of freedom, to be extremely unreasonable. He said, "If you will not marry and perform the duties of a family-man, why should you be a servant of another for life? Offer your whole heart and mind to God and worship Him. A man, born in the world, cannot do anything greater than that. If you find it quite impossible to lead a single life, marry; but know once for all that God-realization is the ultimate aim of life. Tread the path of righteousness and live a householder's life." This was his definite opinion on the matter. Therefore, he felt a severe blow at heart when he heard that any one of those whom he considered to be the best of moderate aspirants in the spiritual world, had married or was wasting his energy by taking service like ordinary people without any special reason for earning money, or by engaging himself in any other worldly occupation with a view to acquiring name and fame. Hearing that one[1] of his boy-devotees had taken service, one day the Master said to him, "You have taken service for maintaining your old mother; so, I can put up with it. Otherwise, I could not have looked at your face." When another boy-devotee[2] married and came to see him at the Kasipur garden, he threw his arms around his neck, as one does when mourning the loss of a son, and shed incessant tears, saying over and over again, "May you not forget God and completely sink in the sea of the world."

18. Sincere faith in God and foolishness are two different things. One must have discrimination between the real and the unreal

Under the impulse of new love for God, some devotees put a wrong interpretation on the saying, "No one can progress in religion without faith", and started believing anything and any person. As soon as the keen eye of the Master fell on them, he understood their condition and warned them. He, no doubt, advised people to tread the path of religion with faith alone as the guide. But he, nevertheless, advised, them not to give up discrimination between what was desirable and what was not. His opinion, we believe, was that one should proceed on the path of religion exercising discrimination, and one should not be ready to do any worldly action without deliberating whether it was desirable or otherwise. One[1] of those

who had taken refuge in him, one day, after warning a shopkeeper of divine chastisement of all dishonest persons, purchased an iron pan from him. When he came home he found that the pan given by the shopkeeper had a crack in it. The Master came to know of it and scolded him saying, “Should one be a fool because one has to be a devotee of God? Has the shopkeeper set up a shop to practise religion? And should piety be the reason for you to believe him and bring the pan without once examining it? Never do so again. If you want to buy articles, you should ascertain their real price from a few shops, examine them thoroughly at the time of buying them, and you should not come away without taking the extra quantity of those articles, which it is usual to give the customer when the transaction is over.”

19. The Master’s teaching to persons of different temperaments regarding mildness and harshness

The tendency to mildness on the part of people of certain temperaments increases so much while they practise religion, that it becomes at last the cause of their bondage and sometimes leads them to stray away from religion. It happens very often with men and women of tender nature. Therefore the Master always taught such people to be stern and those of the opposite nature to be tender. The heart of one[1] of us was too tender. It is doubtful whether we ever saw him being angry or using harsh words even when there was good reason for it. Unable to see his mother shed tears, one day he suddenly bound himself with the tie of matrimony though it was completely against his nature and though he had not the slightest desire for it. The protecting power and the words of assurance of the Master alone saved him on that occasion from the terrible despair and overmuch repentance his heart fell a victim to, owing to that action of his. The Master kept a careful eye on him so that he might control his tendency to tenderness and mildness and do every action with due deliberation. How the Master taught him with the help of trifling things will be clear when one or two incidents are mentioned here. One day a cockroach was seen in the case in which the Master’s clothes and other things were kept. The Master said to him, “Catch the cockroach, take it outside the room and kill it.” He caught it and went out but set it free instead of killing it. As soon as he came

back, the Master said, “Well, have you killed the cockroach?” Embarrassed, he said, “No, sir, I set it free.” The Master scolded him and said, “Ah! I told you to kill it and you set it free! Act exactly as I tell you; otherwise, you will follow your own whim in serious matters in future and will have to repent.”

20. The Master’s instructions to Yogananda

While he was coming to Dakshineswar one day in a boat, Yogin, when questioned by one of the passengers, said that he was going to the Master at Rani Rasmani’s Kali temple. Hardly had that man heard this when he started calumniating the Master thus: “What else is that but a feigning? Ah! That’s a fine deceit perpetrated on the public! He eats good food, lies on cushions and turns the heads of the school-boys.” Yogin was touched to the quick to hear those words; he thought of giving the man a bit of his mind. But under the influence of his mild nature, the next moment he thought, “Many people, without exerting themselves in the least to understand the Master, have quite a wrong conception about him and speak ill of him. What can I do in the matter?” Thinking so, he did not make the slightest protest against what that man said and remained silent. When he came to the Master, he related to him, in the course of conversation the event from beginning to end. Yogin was under the impression that the Master, who was never seen to be moved by praise or blame being fully devoid of egoism would laugh it away when he heard about it. But the effect produced on the Master was very different. Seeing that event in a different light, he remarked, “Ah, he spoke ill of me without any reason and you came away, listening silently without doing anything! Do you know what the scriptures say? One should cut off the head of the man speaking ill of one’s Guru or leave that place. And you did not utter a single word of protest against that calumny!”

21. A different instruction to Niranjan under similar circumstances

The reader will understand how the Master’s instructions varied according to the temperaments of the taught, when we mention here another

such event. Niranjan was, by nature, of a harsh temperament. While coming to Dakshineswar in a boat one day, he heard the passengers speak ill of the Master in the same manner as above. He at first protested very strongly against it. But as his protest did not make them desist, he became terribly angry and was ready to retaliate by sinking the boat. Niranjan was very strong and stout and was an expert swimmer too. All shrank in fear to see him getting purple with anger, begged his pardon and implored him to refrain from sinking the boat. The Master came to know of it afterwards and scolded him, saying, "Anger is a most dangerous and reprehensible sin. Should one be under its spell? The anger of a good man is like a mark on water, which vanishes as soon as it is made. Mean-minded men speak many improper things. If one is to quarrel over them, one has to spend one's whole life that way. Consider such men as no better than insects and be indifferent to their words. Just think what a great wrong you were going to commit under the influence of anger. What offence did the helmsman and oarsmen give you for which you were ready to cause harm even to those poor people?"

22. An example of the Master's giving such instruction to women devotees also

The Master gave such instruction to women devotees as well as to men. He, we remember, warned a lady of mild temperament in the following words: "Suppose you feel that a certain acquaintance of yours takes great trouble and helps you in all matters, but, unable to control the infatuation for beauty, his weak mind begins pining for you; should you in that case give a free rein to your kindness to him or be severe upon him, deal him hard kicks and live far away from him? So, take note that one cannot afford to be kind to anybody and everybody under all conditions. There should be a limit to one's kindness. One should take into consideration the time, place and person in bestowing one's kindness."

23. The story of Harish

We remember another incident bearing on this topic. Harish was a strong young man. He had a beautiful wife and a young child. His financial condition was good on the whole. He had paid but a few visits to the Master at Dakshineswar, when his mind became filled with the great idea of renunciation. Seeing his straightforward nature, steadfastness and calm mood, the Master was pleased with him and became his protecting angel. From that time, Harish began to spend most of his time at Dakshineswar in the Master's service, continual meditation, Japa, etc. Nothing—pressure from his guardians, loving invitations from his father-in-law's family, or the bewailing of his wife—could move him. He took almost a vow of silence and proceeded along his path instead of taking notice of any remark from anybody. With a view to drawing our attention to his calm and steadfast temperament, the Master sometimes said, "Those who are men in the true sense of the term like Harish, as for example, remain dead to all provocations and do not give rise to any reaction."

24. "This in not a case for showing kindness"

As Harish had given up all his worldly affairs and engaged himself in Sadhana and devotional exercises, one day word came that all the members of his family had become much grieved and his wife, unable to bear his separation any longer, had become overwhelmed with sorrow and had almost given up food and drink. Harish heard it but remained silent as before. With a view to knowing his mind, the Master took him aside and said, "Your wife is so much grieved. Why don't you go home and let her see you once? In a way it may be said that there is no one[1] to look after her. So, what is the harm if you are a little kind to her?" Harish said humbly, "Sir, this is not a case for showing kindness. If I am to be kind here, it is possible that I may become overwhelmed with worldly attachment and forget the main duty of life. Pray, don't command me so." The Master was highly pleased with what he said and used to quote his words to us from time to time and praise his detachment.

25. The Master observed the daily trifling actions of persons and gave instruction accordingly

Many examples can be given to show that the Master observed our ordinary daily actions and thus knew the good and bad qualities of our minds. Seeing Niranjan take too much of ghee (clarified butter), he said, "To take so much of ghee! Will you at last abduct people's daughters and daughters-in-law?" Once the Master became displeased with a person for some time because he slept too much. When another person, led by the strong desire to study the medical science, neglected to obey him, the Master said, "Far from giving up desires one after another, you are adding to them; how then can you expect to make spiritual progress?" We have placed before the reader many examples of this nature from time to time in connection with other topics. It is therefore needless to multiply them here.

Knowing with the help of the aforesaid methods the natural temperament of those who had taken refuge in him, the Master not only instructed them how to modify or rectify the defects, but tried again and again to find out how far the instructions were carried out. Besides, he was seen to adopt a particular means in order to ascertain the degree of the spiritual progress of certain persons. The means was this:

26. Ascertaining the spiritual growth of a person by observing how far he had accepted the Master as the highest manifestation of spirituality in modern times

Fourthly, the Master made it a rule to observe whether the attitude of devotion and reverence, under the impulse of which a particular person came to him for the first time, was daily increasing or not. With a view to knowing it, the Master sometimes asked how far a particular person understood a particular spiritual state or conduct of his; at other times he observed whether that person had perfect faith in all his words or not; and at still other times he helped him in various ways, such as introducing him to those of his order, close relationship with whom would deepen his spiritual mood. So, the Master could not be free from anxiety regarding the realization of spirituality on the part of that person, till the latter could, by the natural impulse of his mind, accept him as the manifestation of the highest spiritual ideal in the modern world.

27. Why it was natural for the Master to ascertain by the above mentioned means the degree of spiritual progress of a particular person

The reader will no doubt be surprised to hear the above-mentioned words. But a little thought will make it clear that there is nothing to be surprised at; on the contrary, it was but reasonable and natural for the Master to say so. He had no alternative, but had to behave that way, because he actually felt that in him there was a manifestation of spirituality to an extent never known before. We have tried to explain to the reader elsewhere that, when as a result of the long practice of austerity, meditation and Samadhi, his egoism was completely destroyed and the very possibility of an error and delusion in him vanished for ever, eternal memory and illumination of infinite knowledge appeared in his mind and made him realize in his heart of hearts that such a new and wonderful spiritual ideal was manifested through his body and mind as had never before been witnessed anywhere else in the world. Therefore, he had naturally to believe that all those who properly comprehended it and tried to illumine their lives with the light of that ideal would easily make spiritual progress in the modern age. It was, therefore, not surprising that he should try to find out thoroughly whether those who came to him understood properly what has been stated before about him and whether they were making efforts to mould their lives after the highly liberal ideas manifested in him.

The Master expressed the above-mentioned conviction of his mind in various ways. He used to say, “A coin of the time of the Nawabs is not legal tender during the period of the Badshas”; “You will straightaway reach the goal if you move on as I say”; “He who is living his last life, who has come to the end of the series of transmigrations, *(i.e.,* who is to be liberated in this life) shall have to come here and accept the liberal doctrine of this place”[1]; “Your chosen Ideal is residing here (showing himself); if you meditate on this, you will be meditating on Him” and so on.

We shall give here a few examples to explain how the Master used to make inquiries regarding others’ faith in himself. The reader will then be better able to understand what we have said.

28. Different devotees gave different answers to his query: “What’s your idea about me?”

Whoever has had the blessing of meeting the Master and receiving his grace knows that the Master, when alone or in the company of the select few, would suddenly put this question to a fortunate devotee, “Well, what is your idea about me? Who am I?” This question was put to a person who had for some time been coming to him at Dakshineswar and had become a little closely related to him. Although this was generally so, it was not as if the Master never asked this question of anyone on his first visit or very shortly after. He, we know, put that question immediately on their arrival to those devotees of whom he had known long ago through his Yogic visions that they would come to him. What a variety of answers he used to get from them cannot be described. “You are a true Sadhu”, “a true devotee of God,” “a great soul”, “a perfected man”, “an incarnation of God,” “Sri Chaitanya himself”, “Siva Himself”, “the divine Lord”,—are but a few specimens of them. Some Brahmos, who did not believe in an incarnanation of God, said, “You are a lover of God, equal to Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Chaitanya and other foremost devotees.” Again asked thus, a person named Williams[1], a Christian, expressed his opinion that the Master was “Jesus himself, the Son of God, the embodiment of eternal Consciousness.” We cannot say how far all these persons understood him; but they, in doing so, expressed their own ideas of the Master and of God at the same time. The Master for his part looked at those answers of theirs in the light mentioned above and behaved towards them and gave them instructions according to the spiritual attitude of each. For, instead of destroying anybody’s spiritual attitude, the Master, an embodiment of all spiritual attitudes, helped everyone to develop his own mood and attitude to the highest degree, and ultimately realize the divine Lord whose real nature is Truth and who is beyond time and space. But he was very particular to notice whether the man expressed his own idea or was prompted by another.

29. The first example of this: The devout Purnachandra and “the kidnapping teacher”

It may well be said that Purna[1] was a mere boy when he came to the Master. It seemed he was just a little over thirteen then. Sri Mahendra, the great devotee of the Master, was then the headmaster of the school at Shyambazar, established by the broad-minded Vidyasagar. He used to bring to the Master at Dakshineswar those boys who by nature were found to possess love of God. Thus he took to him, one after another, Tejchandra, Narayan, Haripada, Vinod, (junior) Naren, Pramatha (Paltu), and other boys of the Baghbazar quarter, who took refuge in the Master. Some of us, therefore, called him in fun "the kidnapping teacher". Hearing it, the Master would say smiling, "It is the right appellation for him". One day while teaching the boys of the class three of the school, his mind was attracted by the fine nature and sweet talk of Purna and shortly afterwards he made arrangements for introducing the boy to the Master. The arrangements were of course made secretly. For, Purna's guardians were men of a harsh temperament; so if they should know it, both teacher and pupil were sure to be insulted. Purna, therefore, came to school at the usual time and went to Dakshineswar in a hired carriage and, returning to the school before it was closed for the day, he went home at the usual hour.

30. The Master was pleased to see Purna; he spoke of his high spiritual fitness

The Master was highly pleased to see Purna that day and, giving him instruction and light refreshments with great affection, said at the time of his return, "Come whenever it is convenient for you; come in a carriage; there will be arrangements here about the payment of your carriage hire." He said to us afterwards, "Purna is a part of Narayana and a spiritual aspirant possessing a high degree of Sattva. In this respect, he may be said to occupy a place immediately below Naren. With the coming of Purna the circle of devotees of that class, whom I saw long ago in Yogic visions, coming here for the purpose of realizing God, is complete. Therefore, no one of that class will come here any more."

31. The Master's loving behaviour towards Purna

Purna had an extraordinary change in his mental state that day. The memory of his past relation with the Master was awakened, and made him completely calm and indrawn. Incessant tears of bliss streamed forth from his eyes. For fear of his guardians, he had to make a great effort to control himself before he went home that day. There appeared since then a very great eagerness in the Master's mind to see Purna often and feed him. He sent him various kinds of food whenever there was an opportunity. He instructed the man who took them to Purna to hand them over to him secretly. For, if that were known in his household, there was a possibility of his being ill-treated.

32. The Master's eagerness to see Purna. At the time of his second meeting with Purna he asked him the question "What's your idea about me? Who am I?"

On many occasions we saw the Master shedding incessant tears at his eagerness to see Purna. Seeing us full of surprise owing to his behaviour, one day he said, "You are amazed to see me thus attracted towards Purna; I don't know how you would have felt had you seen the longing that arose in my heart when I first saw Naren and how very restless I was on that occasion." Whenever he was eager to see Purna, the Master would come to Calcutta at midday, and going to Balaram Basu's house at Baghbazar or to the house of anyone else of that quarter, would send word and have him called from school. It was at one of such places that Purna had the privilege of seeing the Master for the second time and was completely merged in his self that day. The Master on that occasion fed him with his own hand like an affectionate mother and asked him, "Well, what's your idea about me? Who am I?" Overwhelmed by an extraordinary impulse of the heart and swelling with devotion, Purna replied, "You are the divine Lord, God Himself."

33. The Master was pleased with the reply; his instruction to the boy

The Master found no limit to his joy and astonishment that day when he knew that the boy Puma could accept him as the highest spiritual ideal as soon as he saw him. He blessed the boy with all his heart and gave him

instruction about the secret of spiritual practice and initiated him with a potent sacred Mantra. Afterwards, returning to Dakshineswar, he said to us again and again, “Well, Purna is a mere boy; his intellect has not developed; how has he understood it? Under the impulse of divine impressions some others also gave the same answer to that question. It is surely due to the impressions accumulated during previous lives that the picture of untarnished truth naturally appears to their pure Sattvika mind.”

34. The greatness of Purna, who lived in the world

Purna had to marry by the force of circumstances and live a family life. But all those who were closely related with him unanimously bear witness to his extraordinary faith, reliance on God, love of Sadhana, freedom from egoism and selflessness in all respects.

35. Second example: That question was put to Vaikunthanath, and his reply

We shall give another example showing that the Master put that question to the devotees who took refuge in him. The Master showed the picture of the great lord Sri Chaitanya in Sankirtan kept in his room to a person very well known to us, shortly after that person came to Dakshineswar, and said, “Do you see how all are filled with divine emotions?”

That person: “Sir, they are all low-class fellows.”

The Master: “How is it? Should one say so?”

That person: “Yes sir; I belong to Nadia; I know these Vaishnavas are generally low-class fellows.”

The Master: “You belong to Nadia; then I make another salutation[1] to you. Well, Ram and others call this (showing his own person) an incarnation. Let me know what you think of it.”

That person: “Sir, have they used a word of such low import?”

The Master: “How is that? They say ‘incarnation of God’, and you say it is of low import!”

That person: “Yes sir; an incarnation is a part of God; to me it seems you are Siva Himself.”

The Master: “What do you say!”

That person: “That thought comes to my mind; pray, what can I do? You have asked me to meditate on Siva; but I cannot succeed in it, though I try daily to do so. As soon as I sit down for meditation, your gracious face appears radiant before me. I can by no means bring in Siva by removing it, nor do I feel inclined to. So, I meditate on you as Siva.”

The Master: (affectionately smiling) “Oh, what a thing to say! But I know I am like a tiny hair of yours. (Both laughed.) I had much anxiety about you; I am now freed of it today.”

We do not know whether that person understood at that time why the Master spoke the last of the quoted words. In such cases, it is known to us, our hearts swelled with joy to feel that the Master had become pleased and we had no desire left to try to understand those words of his. The Master, we feel, said those words to that person because he knew that that person had accepted him as the highest spiritual ideal.

36. No one whose words and actions do not agree should be believed

The Master tried his best to see that the devotees who had taken refuge in him should observe minutely all his deportment and behaviour and knowingly accept him in that manner. For, very often he said to us, “Observe a holy man in the daytime, observe him at night and then have faith in him.” The Master always encouraged us to observe whether a holy man practised what he taught others. He said that one should not believe a man whose thoughts, words and actions do not agree. We heard the Master sometimes tell a story in this connection:

37. The Master’s story bearing on the topic; the physician and the boy patient

There was a man whose young son always suffered from indigestion. One day the father took him for treatment to a famous physician in a remote village. The physician examined the boy and diagnosed his disease. But,

instead of prescribing medicine for the patient, he asked him to come again on the morrow. When the father went to him the next day with his son, the physician said to the boy, “Give up taking molasses and the disease will be cured; there is no need to take medicine.” Hearing these words, the father said, “Sir you might have very well said this yesterday; in that case, I need not have taken so much trouble to come so far today.” The physician replied, “Don’t you see? I had a few jars full of molasses here yesterday; you perhaps noticed it. Had I forbidden the boy yesterday to take molasses, he would have thought that the physician was a peculiar person indeed; he takes so much of molasses himself and asks me to refrain from it! Thinking so, he would not have any faith in my words, not to speak of regard for them. That is why, I did not tell you so before removing the jars of molasses.”

38. The devotees tested the Master

Encouraged by the teaching of the Master, all of us minutely observed all his deportment and behaviour. Some, again, did not hesitate to test him. It was seen that he gladly put up with all the undue liberty we took with him, of course in all sincerity, for the increase of our faith and devotion. The following incident is a clear example of this.

39. First example: The story of Swami Yogananda

We have already told the reader certain things about Swami Yogananda. He was the hero of this story and we heard it from him afterwards. We shall first give a brief introductory description of Swami Yogananda before we begin to narrate the story. The premonastic name of Yogananda was Yogindranath Raychaudhuri. He was born in the well-known family of Savarna Chaudhuris. His father Navinchandra was a rich zamindar at one time and the family had been living for generations in the village of Dakshineswar itself. Yogindra’s home always resounded with the recital of the *Mahabharata,* the *Bhagavata* and other scriptures, worship, Kirtan and so on during his childhood and before that period. The Master said that he went to that house many times during the period of his Sadhana with a view

to listening to the discourses on Hari and was acquainted with some of the members of the house. But scarcely had Yogindra passed his early boyhood when they lost a greater part of their property owing to domestic quarrels and various other reasons and the Chaudhuri family was fast approaching penury.

40. The good impressions of Yogindra and his intelligence

Yogindra was calm, mild and possessed of a sweet nature from his childhood. He was born with extraordinary good qualities. As the child grew up to have a sort of knowledge about himself and the world, the thought always came to his mind that he was not of this world; this was not the place of his true residence; his real residence was in a certain distant group of stars and his familiar companions were still living there. We never saw him becoming angry. Swami Vivekananda said, “If there is amongst us anyone who has conquered lust in all respects, it is Yogin.” Although he was sometimes scolded by the Master because he naively believed all sorts of people, Yogindra was not foolish. Though he was always seen quietly engaged in his own duties, the conclusions at which his active mind arrived by observing all actions of people proved invariably to be true. Therefore, he seemed to be a little proud of his intelligence.

41. The Master said that Yogindra was an Isvarakoti devotee

Being a resident of Dakshineswar, he had the blessing of meeting the Master when he had hardly reached his youth. The Master was highly pleased to see him when Yogindra was introduced to him for the first time. He became convinced that Yogin was one of those who had been shown by the divine Mother long ago as destined to come to him for spiritual enlightenment; nay, he came to know a little after, by the grace of the universal Mother, that he was one of those six marked persons who were known as Isvarakotis.

42. Yogindra married and repented. He shrank from coming to the Master, who cleverly had him brought to him and gave him assurance

We have said elsewhere that Yogindra married suddenly against his will on account of his mother's pathetic weeping. He said, "As soon as I married, the thought came to me that the hope of God-realization is now a mockery; why should I go to the Master whose very first teaching was the renunciation of lust and gold? I have spoilt my life on account of the tenderness of my heart; it cannot be undone; now, the sooner I die the better for me. I used to visit the Master daily before; but, after this event, I had altogether stopped going to him and been passing my days in utter despair and repentance. But the Master did not forsake me. He sent word again and again, calling me to him; but when he saw that I did not go in spite of all that, he hit upon a peculiar device. A certain person of the Kali temple had given me a few rupees to buy some article for him before my marriage. There was a balance of a few annas left. I sent him the article through a man and sent word also that I would soon send him the balance. The Master knew of this and, feigning anger, one day sent a man to say to me on his behalf, 'What sort of a man are you? You have neither returned the balance, nor even sent word when you will return it to the person who gave you the money to buy his article! What you ought to have done is to submit an account of the money spent and to pay up the balance.' These words touched my pride; I was grievously wounded. I thought, 'The Master has taken me to be a cheat after I have kept his company for so long a time! Well, I'll go somehow today and put an end to the quarrel, and I'll never again turn my steps towards the Kali temple.' I was almost dead with despair, repentance, wounded pride, resentment, etc., when I betook myself to the Kali temple in the afternoon. I saw from a distance that the Master was standing outside his room as if in ecstasy with his cloth in his arm-pit. As soon as he saw me, he came quickly forward saying, 'You have married; what of that? Marry a lakh of wives, no harm can touch you if you but have the grace of this place (meaning himself). If you want to live a family life and realize God at the same time, once bring your wife here; I'll make both her and you fit for that; and if you want to renounce worldly life and attain Him, I'll make that too quite possible for you.' These words of the Master spoken in divine semi-consciousness penetrated deep into my heart and the former darkness of despair vanished into the void. I bowed down to him with tears in my eyes. He, too, affectionately caught hold of my hand and entered his room with me. He did not give ear to what I was going to say

about the above-mentioned account and the balance." Yogindra was born with the mood of an all-renouncing religious mendicant. He married, but that mood of his did not at all undergo a change. He devoted his time ever increasingly to the service of the Master, now his only refuge. Yogin's parents began to complain when they saw their son indifferent to worldly affairs and to the earning of money. He said, "One day while mother was making that complaint, she remarked, 'Why then have you married if you don't like to apply your mind to the earning of money?' I said, 'I told you again and again at the time that I would not marry: I consented at last to do so, only because I could not bear to see you weep.' Highly incensed at these words, mother said, 'You don't say so! you married for my sake without a desire for it! Who ever believes that?' Absolutely stunned at these words of hers, I thought, 'Ah, my Lord! She is the very person whose suffering I was unable to witness and for whose sake I was ready to forsake Thee! Away with it! There is no one else in the world except the Master whose thoughts and words agree.' An absolute abhorrence for the world has possessed my mind ever since. I have started spending nights also with the Master since then."

43. Yogindra spent the night at Dakshineswar

Spending the whole day with the Master, one day Yogindra saw that all the devotees who were at Dakshineswar temple, took leave of him just before dusk and went home, Yogindra gave up the idea of going home on that occasion, thinking that the Master might be in difficulty if he were in need of anything at night, when no one would be near him. The Master too became highly pleased to see Yogin pass the night there. Absorbed in spiritual talks they did not notice that the night was fairly advanced; it was ten. The Master then took some light refreshment. When Yogindra took his meal, the Master asked him to sleep within the room and himself went to bed. When it was past midnight, the Master had a desire to go out; he looked at Yogin and found him quite asleep. Thinking that Yogin would be troubled if he woke him up after his having just entered-into deep sleep, he proceeded alone towards the Panchavati and then went to the group of the Tamarisk trees.

44. Yogindra suspected the Master

Yogindra was noted all his life for his short hours of sleep. His sleep came to an end shortly after the Master had left. Seeing that the door of the room had been left open, he sat up in his bed and not finding the Master in his cot, wondered where he might have gone at that dead of night. He saw the Master's spouted and other water-pots in their proper places and, therefore, thought the Master might be strolling outside. Yogindra came out, looked round in the moonlight, but saw no one. A terrible suspicion then gripped his mind, "Has the Master then gone to the Nahavat, where his wife lives? Does he also deny in action what he professes in words?"

45. Yogindra's suspicion removed

Yogindra said, "No sooner had that thought crossed my mind than I became simultaneously overwhelmed with suspicion, fear and various other feelings. I decided that however cruel and unbecoming it might be, truth must be found out. I then stood at a place near at hand and began watching the door of the Nahavat. Scarcely had I done so for a couple of minutes when I heard the clattering sounds of slippers coming from the side of the Panchavati. Very soon the Master came up and stood before me and said affectionately, 'Ah, you are standing here, I see.' I shrank within myself in shame and fear. 'Oh! I entertained such a terrible suspicion of his character.' I stood there with my head hung down and could give no reply to him. The Master understood everything from my face, but instead of taking offence, at once reassured me and said, 'Well, it is all right. Observe a Sadhu in the day-time as well as at night and believe him then only.' Saying so, he asked me to follow him and proceeded towards his room. I could sleep no more that night, thinking what a great offence I had committed under the impulse of a suspicious nature."

46. Yogindra surrendered himself to the Guru

Swami Yogananda fully atoned for the above-mentioned offence by surrendering himself to the Guru in all respects and laid down his life in the service, at first, of the Master and, after his (the Master's) passing away, of

the Holy Mother. A Yogi like Yogindra, having the experience of Samadhi, possessed of intense detachment and equally qualified for devotion and divine Knowledge, is scarcely seen. He passed away in the year 1899 to merge in the Supreme Self.

47. The Master's opinion about Narendra when he observed his actions

We mentioned before that the Master always observed minutely every action of Narendra since he came to Dakshineswar. Consequently, he knew that courage, valour, self-control, love of religion, self-sacrifice for a good cause and other good qualities were the innate virtues of Narendra's heart. So abundant were the good impressions in his mind that the perpetration of any kind of mean action, to which ordinary people are prone, would, he knew, never be possible for him even if he were to fall into adverse circumstances and were greatly tempted. And as to his devotion to truth? Observing his austere devotion to truth, the Master was so much struck by it that he believed every word of his and had the firm conviction that he would very soon reach such a state that truth and truth only would come out of his mouth and an untruth would never" escape it even by mistake, and that even the chance ideas crossing his mind would prove to be true. He, therefore, always encouraged him in his regard for truth and said, "One who clings to truth with body, mind and speech, is blessed with the vision of God who is Truth Itself. A man who never deviates from truth for twelve years attains whatever he desires."

48. A funny incident: Narendra mistook a housebat for a Chataka

We remember here a funny event regarding the Master's firm faith in Narendra's truthfulness. One day, in the course of a conversation he was explaining that the nature of a devotee is like that of a Chataka bird. He said, "just as a Chataka always looks to the clouds to quench its thirst and depends on them in all respects, even so, a devotee depends on God alone to quench the thirst of his heart and remove all manner of wants." Narendra was then sitting there. He suddenly said, "Sir, although it is generally believed that a Chataka drinks no water except rain-water, it is not true; it

quenches its thirst with waters of rivers and other reservoirs of water like all other birds. I saw a Chataka bird drink such water." The Master said, "How is that? Does a Chataka drink water like other birds? Such a long-standing conviction of mine is then proved to be false, I see. As you have seen it, I can have no doubt about it." The Master who was possessed of a boy's nature, did not rest satisfied by merely saying so. He thought that just as that conviction of his was proved to be false, so, his other convictions might also prove to be so. Thinking so, he felt much dejected. One day, shortly afterwards, Narendra suddenly called the Master and said, "There, there, just see, Sir, yonder Chataka is drinking water from the Ganga." The Master came in a hurry to see it and said, "Where is it?" Narendra showed a bird, which, the Master found, was a small house-bat, that was drinking water. He said smiling, "It is a house-bat. O rascal, you took a house-bat for a Chataka and caused me such great anxiety. I will no more believe in all that you say."

49. Narendra's self-control

The mind of an ordinary man very often assumes in the presence of a lady an attitude of undue tenderness — an attitude not always the result of the impulse of esteem, politeness, the appreciation of beauty, and other noble emotions. That it is due to a kind of hidden impressions of the heart is the opinion of the scriptures. Very little of such impressions was observed in Narendra's heart. The Master noticed it with joy and was firmly convinced that Narendra would never be deflected from the path of self-control by the attraction of a woman's beauty. Comparing Narendra with one[1] who had received great respect from us at one time on account of his frequent trances, the Master said to us one day, "He loses himself in the care of and affection for ladies. But with Narendra it is quite different. I observed minutely, and found him in such situations saying, as it were, with his head turned about, 'Why are they here'?"

50. Narendra's high quality of devotion was ascertained by means of his physical characteristics

The Master said on many occasions that, although there was an unusual manifestation of Vedantic Knowledge and sterner qualities in Narendra's mind, there was no dearth of tenderness and devotion in it. He came to that conclusion by observing his mental states manifested through ordinary actions as well as his physical characteristics. Observing the loveliness of the features of Narendra's face one day, he, we remember, said, "Can persons of 'dry knowledge'[2] have such eyes? You have within you the womanly emotion of devotion as well as knowledge. Those who have within them merely the sterner qualities do not have round their nipples the black marks like those produced by a marking-nut. Arjuna, the great hero, did not have those marks."

51. Narendra's behaviour at the Master's indifference

The Master tested Narendra by other means known and unknown to us besides the four kinds of general means mentioned above. Of those means we shall now tell the reader one or two important ones only. The Master, we have said before, used to busy himself about Narendra when the latter came to Dakshineswar. The moment he saw Narendra at a distance, his entire mind would run out of his body, as it were, with great speed and bind Narendra in an embrace of love. It is impossible to say on how many occasions we saw the Master go into ecstasy saying, "There's Na—, there's Na—". Still, there came a time, even before very close intimacy developed, when Narendra came to the Master, but the latter was supremely indifferent to him. Narendra came, bowed down to the Master, sat in front of him and waited long. The Master looked at him but once and sat wholly indifferent, without even inquiring about his welfare, let alone expressing his loving concern for him. Narendra thought that the Master was perhaps under the influence of spiritual emotions. Having waited long, he came out of the room and began talking to Hazra and smoking. Hearing that the Master was talking to others, Narendra came back to him. But the Master did not speak a word to him and lay down on his bed with his face turned in the opposite direction! The whole day passed in that manner and evening approached; still Narendra found no change in the Master's attitude. So, he bowed down to him and returned to Calcutta.

Hardly had a week elapsed when Narendra came again to Dakshineswar to find the Master in the same mood. On that occasion also he spent the whole day in various talks with Hazra and others and started home before dusk. Narendra came for the third and the fourth time, without finding the slightest change in the attitude of the Master. But, without feeling at all distressed or wounded on account of it, he continued paying his visits to the Master as usual. The Master sent from time to time some one to bring him news of Narendra's welfare when Narendra was staying at home but he continued to behave towards him in that manner for some time more, whenever he came to him. At the end of more than a month when the Master saw that Narendra did not desist from visiting Dakshineswar, he had him called to him one day and asked, "Well, I do not speak even a single word to you; still you come. Why so?" Narendra said, "Do I come here to hear you speak? I love you; I wish to see you; that is why I come." Highly pleased with the reply, the Master said, "I was testing you to see whether you would cease coming if you did not get proper love and attention. It is only a spiritual aspirant of your order that can put up with so much neglect and indifference. Anyone else would have left me long ago and would have never come here again."

52. Narendra refused the offer of the great supernatural powers owing to his eagerness for God-realization

We shall mention one more event and bring the present topic to a close. It will be well understood from this how intense the eagerness for the direct realization of God was in the heart of Narendra. One day the Master called him aside to the Panchavati and said, "As the result of practising austerities for long, I have got all the supernatural powers, such as assuming the minute dimension of an atom, etc. But where is the occasion for a person like me, who cannot even keep his cloth properly round his waist, to make any use of them? So, I am thinking of asking the Mother to transfer all these to you. For, She has told me that you will have to do much work for Her. If all these powers are imparted to you, you will be able to use them when necessary. What do you say?" Narendra had become acquainted with an infinite manifestation of divine power in the Master since the day he first

saw him at Dakshineswar. He had, therefore, no reason to disbelieve these words of his. But the natural love of God in his heart did not prompt him to accept those powers without careful consideration. Narendra thought seriously and asked, “Sir, will they help me in realizing God?” The Master said, “They might be of no help to you in that respect, but they will stand you in good stead when you engage yourself in God’s work after realizing Him.” Hearing these words, Narendra said, “Sir, I have no need of these things. Let me realize God first and then it will be decided whether to accept them or not. If I obtain these wonderful powers now, and goaded by selfishness, forget the aim of life and happen to make improper use of them, it will be wholly ruinous to me.” It is beyond our power to say whether the Master was actually ready to impart such powers as assuming atomic dimension, etc., to Narendra, or spoke like that only to test his mind. But this much we know for certain, that he was highly pleased to see Narendra unwilling to accept them.

Footnote

1. Premonastic name—Baburam.

1. Charuchandra Chakravarti.

2 That is, women who are the embodiments of the divine Mother's creating and preserving powers.

1. Swami Niranjanananda.

2. Younger Narendra.

1. Swami Yogananda.

1. Harish’s mother was not alive. That was perhaps why the Master said so.

1. IV. 4.

1. This person, we have known from a reliable source, came to the conclusion after paying but a few visits to the Master, that the Master was an incarnation of God, and renounced the world according to his instruction. He engaged himself in practising austerities at some place in the Himalayas to the north of Punjab till death.

1. Purnachandra Ghosh.

1. It was a rule with the Master to salute anyone as soon as he saw him. He had saluted that person once already. Hence the expression “ another salutation.”

1. Nityagopal. He assumed the name of Swami Jnanananda later in life.

2. That kind of Vedantic knowledge which views the world to be wholly nonexisting, drawing therefrom the corollary of absolute indifference to the sufferings of humanity and dumb creation and pooh-poohing the attitude of devotion to an all-pervading personal God.—Tr.

CHAPTER VIII—SECTION 1
NARENDRANATH'S SCHOOLING IN THE WORLD AND BY THE MASTER

1. The Master spoke of the manifestation of female nature in himself and of male nature in Narendra. The meaning of this

Contrasting his own nature with that of Narendra, the Master would speak to us from time to time, "The person who is in this (himself) has the nature of a woman manifested in him, while the person who is in Naren has in him the manifestation of the nature proper to a man." It is difficult to ascertain what the Master exactly meant by these words. But we get a reasonable meaning when we study the paths along which they proceeded, the principal means which they adopted in their search for God, the ultimate Truth. For, the Master, it was observed, engaged himself in practising the various scriptural disciplines with full faith in them as soon as he was instructed by the Guru, while the behaviour of Narendra in such cases assumed quite a different nature. Here Narendra, first of all, applied his intellect to ascertaining whether there was any possibility of error in the words of the scriptures and of the teacher and began practising them only when he regarded them as standing the test of reason. Although possessed of a firm faith in the existence of God owing to past impressions, Narendra is seen to have in his mind throughout his life the idea that all men, without exception, are under the influence of various errors and superstitions; and that there is no reason why one should accept indiscriminately any word of any human being. It is superfluous to add that to keep thus under control faith and devotion, irrespective of their origin and consequences, with the help of reason and intellect, and then to act in that light in the spiritual as

well as in other realms is regarded by all in the modern age as natural and proper to a man.

2. Narendra's education from environment. His free thinking, scepticism and non-acceptance of the doctrine of the need of Guru

Environment plays a great part in influencing and moulding human life at all times and in all places. It is, therefore, not at all surprising that its power and influence is seen in Narendra's life. Even before going to the Master, Narendra, by the exercise of his uncommon intellect, became well versed in English literature, European and Indian histories and Western logic and was thoroughly imbued with Western ideas, whose radical principle of research and free thinking entered into his very marrow as early as then. It was therefore natural that he should doubt and, in many cases consider to be untrue, the words of the scriptures and shrink from accepting any particular man as the Guru in any sense except that he was an experienced teacher.

3. Society and his father's life contributed to that education of his

The ideals of life of Narendra's guardians and the condition of the then Calcutta society contributed not a little to that attitude of his. 'His grand-father had a great faith in the Hindu scriptures all his life and he became a monk; but Narendra's father lost that faith in consequence of his Western education and free thinking. The poems of Hafiz, the Persian poet, and the words of Jesus recorded in the Bible, were regarded by him as the highest limit of spiritual-ideas. It is needless to say that he had to have recourse to these books to enjoy the bliss of spiritual thinking because he could not read the Gita and other Hindu Sastras on account of his ignorance of the Sanskrit language. When one day he saw Narendra studying religion, he presented a copy of the Bible to him and said, "If there be anything called religion, it is in this." Although he thus praised the Bible and the poems of Hafiz, his life was not spiritually moulded by the ideas contained in those books. He does not seem to have even felt the need for spirituality; but he derived a sort of momentary pleasure in the company of those books. The ultimate aim of his life was to earn money, live a happy life himself and contribute to others'

happiness by helping them as far as possible. One can see from this and a study of his daily life what a lax faith he had in God, the Self, the next world, etc. Western materialism and the idea that this world was all in all produced in the minds of persons like Narendra's father a terrible doubt about metaphysical entities and, in many cases, gave rise to atheism; they had proved beyond doubt, so they thought, that there was nothing to learn from our ancient Rishis and Sastras, which taught weakness and superstitions only. Consequently, devoid of the spiritual backbone and faith in religion, they cherished one set of ideas inwardly and showed a different set outwardly, thus becoming more and more selfish and hypocritical. The Brahmo Samaj, established by that great intellect Raja Rammohan Roy, tried for a short time to stem that countrywide tide of atheism and materialism; but under the high pressure of Western civilization, that organization too was split into two parties on account of internal quarrels, and lost its splendour at last, and there were then signs noticeable in persons belonging to those two parties that they allowed themselves to be carried along by the prevailing current.

4. Narendra had no peace, as he could not know the truth in spite of his knowledge of Western logic, sciences and philosophy

Narendra became well acquainted with Western sciences and philosophy after his F.A. examination in 1881. He had already mastered the doctrines of Mill and other Western logicians; there arose now a great yearning in his heart to master Descarte's doctrine centring round "I, the thinker", (Cogito ergo sum), Hume and Bentham's atheism, Spinoza's pantheism, Darwin's doctrine of evolution, Comte and Spencer's positivism and agnosticism, and other Western philosophical doctrines, in order to ascertain what was indeed real. Hearing of the great fame of the German philosophers, he tried to get acquainted as far as possible with the doctrines of Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Schopenhauer and others. Again, in order to know how the nerves and the brain are formed and how they function, he went from time to time to the Calcutta Medical College with his friends and applied his mind to the study of physiology and listened to the lectures on the subject. Consequently, he had much knowledge of Western philosophy even before he passed the B.A.

Degree Examination in 1884. But the current of unrest flowed all the more swiftly in his mind inasmuch as that knowledge proved clearly the utter inadequacy of the human mind and intellect to define their own scope and to reveal a glimpse of the truth existing beyond the limit, far less to give us a clue to the discovery of a sure means to the realization of God, that absolute truth, and thereby to the enjoyment of eternal peace.

5. Narendra's vacillation as to which method, the Eastern or the Western, was to be adopted for realizing the truth

Narendra clearly understood with the aid of Western science and philosophy that the reaction of the brain and the senseorgans to the external stimuli created every moment various changes in the human mind and thereby produced in it the knowledge of pain and pleasure. It was of these mental changes alone that man gained any direct experience with the help of time, space, etc., but the real nature of the external world and the things in it, which produced the aforesaid stimulation and changes in his mind, remained for ever unknown and unknowable to him. This fact was equally applicable to the internal world and the real nature of man himself. There also it was seen that although some unknown entity produced in the mind the consciousness of "I" and various other ideas with the help of its own power, man could not detect and comprehend it inasmuch as that entity itself remained beyond time and space. Thus kept back by the impregnable wall of time and space, the human mind was absolutely helpless in whatever direction, inward or outward, it pursued the search after truth. Narendra knew that the instruments, called the five senses of knowledge and the mind and intellect with the help of which man had been attempting to unveil the mystery of the universe, could not succeed in revealing its ultimate cause; that the sense perceptions, on the basis of which man proceeded to build his arguments and draw conclusions, were themselves full of errors and mistakes. All the attempts of the Western savants to ascertain the existence of a self apart from the body had been doomed to miserable failure. The ultimate conclusions of Western philosophy regarding the spiritual truth did not, therefore, appear to be reasonable to Narendra. There also arose a serious doubt in his mind whether it was

desirable, in imitation of the West, to found philosophy on the basis of accepting as true and natural, the sense perceptions of the ordinary people, who were ever attached to the enjoyments of sense pleasures; or whether it was meek and proper to base it on the uncommon realizations of great souls of ideal character like Buddha and Jesus, according to the practice of the East, in spite of the fact that their experiences ran counter to those of the ordinary man.

6. Narendra kept his resolve of attaining God, the ultimate truth and accepted only the beneficial aspects of the Western approach

Although a greater part of the conclusions of Western philosophy regarding spirituality appeared to Narendra to be unreasonable, he greatly extolled Western discoveries in the material sciences and the Western method of analysis; and in his examination of the truths of psychology and spirituality, he always took the help of those discoveries and analyses. He always tried since then to analyse and understand the extraordinary realizations of the Master's life with the help of these instruments, and those things alone which stood the rigour of these tests, he accepted as true and fearlessly followed in practice. Though a terrible restlessness for the realization of truth was gnawing at his heart, still it was against his nature to do anything unintelligently or to respect any one out of fear of him. If atheism were the inevitable result of the exercise of discrimination to the utmost of his power, he was ever ready to accept that. He would not shrink from truth or from the endeavour to solve life's mystery even at the cost of his life, not to speak of the enjoyment of pleasures in the world. Having, therefore, a steadfast eye to the pursuit of the ultimate truth he now engaged himself in pursuing Western education and accepting its sounder parts. He gave up the straight path of faith and devotion under its influence, as doubts oppressed and sometimes overwhelmed him. But his extraordinary perseverance and intellectual powers prevailed finally and helped him to have the ultimate aim of his life fulfilled at last. But, people then happened to think that Narendra accepted indiscriminately all the opinions published in Western books. His partiality at the time for Western opinions became so well-known among his friends that when, one day, after having read the

Gita he highly eulogized it, they were taken aback and told the Master of this. The Master, too, said, “I hope, he did not do so because some Western scholars had expressed that opinion.”

7. Narendra’s faith in the existence of God was at this time protected by his Guru’s grace and his own wonderful visions

One thing, however, is to be carefully noted, that Narendra had met the Master and had had a few extraordinary spiritual experiences before he came into contact with the Western education which produced the great revolution in his ideas. We have already told the reader of those experiences. It is clear that they helped him very much in placing firm faith in the existence of God. Otherwise it is difficult to ascertain where and how far he would have been carried away by the Western ideas and doctrines which proved that God, the cause of the universe, was unknown and unknowable. Although they would not have altogether destroyed his faith in the existence of God, on account of his strong previous good impressions, there was every chance of its being terribly shaken by the impact. But that was not to be. For, was his life not protected by Providence to accomplish a special task in the world? The Guru, the knower of Brahman, in whom he found a refuge by the grace of God, said to him over and over again, “God always hears the plaintive prayer of man and He can be seen, heard and touched palpably, being more real than the fact of this conversation of ours. I stake my credit on this.” On another occasion, he said to him “If you cannot accept the form of God or the common well-known ideas about Him because they are the products of human thought, and at the same time have faith in the existence of a God, the controller of the universe, He will certainly bestow His grace on you if you offer such a plaintive prayer as this, ‘O God, I don’t know Thy nature; please manifest Thyself to me as Thou really art.’ It is Superfluous to say that these words of the Master reassured him immensely and made him apply his mind to Sadhana with greater zeal than ever.

8. Narendra’s Sadhana

Hamilton, the Western philosopher, has said at the end of his book on philosophy that the human intellect gives a mere indication of the existence of God, the Controller of this world, and there its function ends. It is not in its power to reveal the nature of God. So, here philosophy ends; and "where philosophy ends there religion begins". Narendra liked these words of Hamilton very much. He quoted it to us many times in the course of conversation. Narendra, however, did not give up the study of philosophy, though he applied his mind to Sadhana. He practically spent his time in music, meditation and study.

9. He adopted a new method of meditation and spent whole nights in it

Narendra adopted a new method of practising meditation from that time on. We have already said that in our meditation on the Lord, with or without forms, we can but think of Him anthropomorphically. Before he realized this, Narendranath used to apply his mind during meditation to the thought of the formless Brahman with attributes as prescribed by the Brahmo Samaj. But coming to the conclusion that even this conception about the nature of God was anthropomorphic, he now gave up that kind of meditation also and prayed to the effect: "O God, make me fit to see Your real nature." He then removed all kinds of thought from his mind and keeping it still and motionless like the flame of a lamp in a windless place, tried to remain in that state. As the result of doing so for a short time, Narendra's mind, which had all along been restrained, used to merge in itself so deeply that even the consciousness of time and of his own body disappeared now and then. He sat for meditation in his room when all the household had gone to bed and spent whole nights that way on many occasions.

As the result of that, one day, Narendra had an extraordinary vision. Later, he described it thus to us in the course of conversation:

10. An extraordinary vision during that meditation; the vision of Buddha

"There flowed in my mind a current of serene bliss when I kept it still, devoid of all objects. I felt for a long time even after the end of the

meditation, a sort of intoxication under its impulse. So, I did not feel inclined to leave the seat and get up immediately. One day, when I was siting in that condition at the end of the meditation, I saw the extraordinary figure of a monk appear suddenly, from where I did not know, and stand before me at a little distance filling the room with a divine effulgence. He was in ochre cloth with a Kamandalu in his hand. His face bore such a calm and serene expression of inwardness born of indifference to all things that I was amazed and felt much drawn towards him. He walked forward towards me with a slow step, with his eyes steadfastly fixed on me, as if he wanted to say something. But I was seized with fear and could not keep quiet. I got up from my seat, opened the door and walked out of the room with rapid step. The next moment I thought, 'Why this foolish fear'? I made bold and went back into the room to hear the monk, who, alas, was no longer there. I waited long in vain and felt dejected, repenting that I had been stupid enough to fly away without listening to him. I have seen many monks, but never have I found such an extraordinary expression in any other face. That face has been indelibly imprinted in my heart. It may be a hallucination, but very often it comes to my mind that I had the good fortune of seeing Lord Buddha that day."

CHAPTER VIII—SECTION 2
NARENDRANATH'S SCHOOLING IN THE WORLD AND BY THE MASTER—(contd.)

1. Narendra as a junior to Nimai Charan Basu, an attorney-at-law

NARENDRA spent his time in seclusion, in studies and the practice of austerity, and in frequenting Dakshineswar. Planning his future, Narendra's father employed him at that time to learn the profession of an attorney as a junior to Nimai Charan Basu, the well-known attorney of Calcutta. With a view to making his son live a worldly life, Viswanath then began searching for a suitable bride. But that hope of his was being delayed as Narendra had a great objection to marriage and the father himself could not find out a bride to his own liking.

2. The Master instructed Narendra to observe life-long continence

The Master sometimes happened to go to Narendra's study at Ramtanu Basu's Lane and give him various instructions regarding Sadhana, devotional exercises, etc. At that time he always encouraged him to observe continence and warned him against foolishly binding himself down to matrimony at the plaintive request of his parents. The Master said to him, "As the result of observing continuous continence for twelve years, man has his retentive nerve opened. His intellect can then penetrate into the subtlest things and comprehend them; it is with the help of that intellect only that God can be realized; it is only to such a pure intellect that He reveals Himself."

3. Every member of Narendra's household was afraid that he would become a monk by moving with Sadhus

At that time there arose an impression in the minds of the ladies of the house that Narendra was unwilling to marry owing to his close relation with the Master. Narendra said, "One day when the Master came to my study room and was giving me the instruction to observe lifelong continence, my grandmother overheard everything and informed my parents of it. They began making great efforts from that day on to marry me lest I should become a monk by moving with Sadhus. But of what avail was all that? All their efforts against the strong will of the Master failed. Even when everything was settled, the marriage negotiations broke off in a few cases on account of the difference of opinion between the twoparties about trifling things."

4. Narendra continued visiting the Master as before

Although Narendra's frequent visits to the Master at Dakshineswar were not to the liking of any one of his household, no one ventured to make any remark about it to him. For, Narendra, the dearest son of his parents, paid no heed from his childhood to the restraints set by any one on his conduct and took the liberty of behaving as he liked in everything. All the household knew that if they tried to prevent the keenly intelligent Narendra from doing anything in the manner people prevent a boy or a weak-minded young man, it was probable that a contrary result would follow. Narendra, therefore, went on visiting the Master at Dakshineswar as before.

5. Narendra's own words as to how he spent his time with the Master at Dakshineswar

The sweet memory of the days Narendra spent with the Master at Dakshineswar during this period filled his mind with infinite joy throughout his life. He said, "It is difficult to explain to others how blissfully I spent my days with the Master. There is no limit to our astonishment when we think of how, through play, merriment and other ordinary daily activities, he gave us high exalted spiritual education and moulded our lives without our

knowledge. Just as a powerful wrestler, at the time of teaching a boy, keeps his skill in reserve and displays only a part his power, as suits the purpose of teaching the boy, produces self-confidence in him sometimes by defeating him seemingly with great effort, and sometimes allowing himself to be defeated by him; so, on many occasions the Master assumed that attitude in dealing with us at that time. He always saw, 'a whole sea in a drop of water', as they say. Having had in ecstasy the immediate knowledge of the fully developed tree, laden with fruits and flowers, which the seed of spirituality hidden in our hearts would assume in future, he would praise and encourage us in every way and at all times. And observing very carefully each of our actions, he kept us under restraint by giving us instruction lest we should get entangled among desires and fail to reach the fruition of our lives. But we could not know at all that he observed us so minutely and controlled us so effectively. That was an extraordinary skill which the Master displayed in teaching us and moulding our lives. We felt that the mind, although getting a little concentrated at the time of meditation, could not dive deeper for want of a proper object; we asked him what we should do, when he told us what he himself had done in similar circumstances and suggested various useful methods. When I sat for meditation during the last part of the night, the mind, I remember, became distracted and deflected from the object of meditation on account of the noise produced by the whistling sound of the Jute Mills of Alambazar; when I referred the matter to him, he advised me to concentrate my mind upon the sound of the whistle itself and I derived much benefit from that. On another occasion I apprised him of my difficulty in forgetting the body and concentrating the mind on the goal and sought his advice. He mentioned the words addressed to him by Sri Tota Puri at the time of his Sadhana of Vedantic Samadhi, and sharply pierced my forehead between the eyebrows with the tip of his nail, saying, 'Concentrate your mind upon that pain.' And actually I found that the pain produced by that cut could be kept uniformly in the mind as long as I liked; and I completely forgot even the existence of all the other parts of the body, let alone the risk of the mind being distracted by them. The secluded Panchavati, the place of the Master's Sadhana, was very well suited for our meditation and other spiritual exercises. Why speak of spiritual exercises alone? We spent much time there in play and merriment also. At those time the Master too joined us as far as possible and

added to our happiness. There we ran about, climbed trees and sitting in the swing formed by the Madhavi creeper as strong as cable, swung freely and merrily; and sometimes we picnicked, cooking our meals ourselves. Seeing that I cooked with my own hand on the first day of the picnic, the Master himself took that cooked rice and other preparations. I knew that he could not take cooked rice out of the hands of people other than Brahmins; I was going to arrange for him the offered food of the temple. But he prevented me from doing so and said, 'Nothing will happen to me if I take food cooked by a person of pure Sattva, like you.' I raised repeated objections, but he did take the rice cooked by me that day without paying attention to my remonstrances."

6. Bhavanath and Narendra's friends of Baranagar

A devout person of pleasant looks named Bhavanath Chattopadhyaya had come to the Master at Dakshineswar some time previously, become acquainted with Narendra and contracted friendship with him. Bhavanath became dear to the Master on account of his faith, devotion, humility and simplicity. Seeing his tender nature which was that of a woman and his uncommon love for Narendra, the Master sometimes said jokingly, "You were perhaps the life-companion of Narendra in a previous birth." Bhavanath lived at Baranagar and whenever there was an opportunity, took Narendra to his house and fed him. Satkari Lahiri, Bhavanath's neighbour, was very well acquainted with Narendra; and Dasarathi Sannyal was Narendra's class-mate and friend. Whenever Narendra was available, they spent days and nights with him. So, now and then, when on a visit to Dakshineswar or sometimes when specially invited by them, Narendra used to spend a few hours or a day or two with these Baranagar friends of his.

7. At Baranagar Narendra heard the news of the sudden death of his father

A great change came in the course of events in the life of Narendra, early in the year 1884, some time before the result of the B.A. Examination was out. His father, Viswanath had had a nervous breakdown some time

previously on account of over-work. One night at about 10 p.m., he suddenly died of heart-failure. Invited by his Baranagar friends, Narendra had gone to them in the afternoon of that day and occupied himself in singing devotional songs till about eleven at night. He then lay in the same room after taking his meal with them and was talking on different topics. His friend Hemali came at about 2 a.m. and broke that terrible news to him and started with him immediately for Calcutta.

8. A deplorable change in Narendra's worldly circumstances.

Narendra returned home and performed the obsequies of his father. On making inquiries afterwards, he came to know that their worldly circumstances were extremely deplorable. Instead of leaving some property, his father had left behind him only a debt, having spent more than what he had earned. Their relatives had improved their worldly circumstances with the help of Narendra's father and, now finding the opportunity, turned inimical and even plotted to eject the family from their home. It might well be said that there was in fact no income for the family and yet five or six persons had somehow to be maintained. Brought up thoroughly in comfort and happiness, Narendra did not know what he should do and was going from place to place in search of a job. When an unfavourable period occurs in one's life, even a hundred efforts on the part of one prove utterly futile. Narendra met with frustration everywhere.

Three or four months elapsed, one after another, after the death of his father. But the sky of Narendra's life was as overcast with clouds as ever, with no trace of a silver lining anywhere. Nor was there a distant gleam of hope of a bright future. It is doubtful if he ever waded through such darkness again in his life. Talking of this period, he said sometimes to us:

9. Narendra's description of that condition—search for a job, contempt shown by his rich acquaintances

"I went about hither and thither in search of a job even before the period of mourning was over. Suffering from lack of food, I was going barefooted from office to office with an application for a job in my hand in the blazing

midday sun. Sympathizing with me in my sorrow, some of my very intimate friends would be with me some days, but on other days they could not be. But I was disappointed everywhere. From that very first worldly experience of mine I felt keenly that selfless sympathy was very rare in this world—there was no place here for the weak and the poor. Those who deemed it a piece of good fortune to be able to help me only a day or two previously, now found an opportunity to do the contrary and made a wry face at me and, although able, were reluctant to help me. When I had such experiences, the world very often seemed to me to have been created by a demon. One day, at that time, when I was going from place to place in the sun, my sole, I remember, got blistered. Extremely fatigued, I had to sit down in the shade of the Ochterloney Monument in the Maidan. A friend or two were with me that day or met me there by chance. One of them, I remember distinctly, sang by way of consoling me:

'Here blows the wind, the breath of Brahman, His grace palpable ..'

"When I heard the song I felt as if he was inflicting severe blows on my head. Remembering the sheer helpless condition of my mother and brothers, I burst out in resentment, despair and disappointment, 'Shut up. Those who are in the lap of luxury and do not know what the pinch of hunger means and those whose nearest and dearest ones are not starving and going naked —to such people, in the midst of the fullest enjoyment of life, such flights of imagination appear sweet and pleasing. I also had such days and felt similarly, but now, confronted with stern reality, all these sentiments seem to be a terrible mockery.'

10. Grinding poverty

"Maybe, the friend was highly offended to hear those words of mine. But how could he understand what a severe grinding poverty it was that had drawn those words out of my mouth? On leaving my bed in the morning and making secret enquiries I found on some days that there was no food sufficient for all the household and, as there was no money in my pocket, I went out telling mother, 'I have an invitation to lunch with a friend of mine.' During those occasions, on some days I took very little food and on others went without any food at all, so that others might have their fill. I

was too proud to speak out these things to any one in the family or outside. Rich friends took me to their houses or gardens now as before and requested me to add to their pleasure with music, etc. Unable to avoid them, I sometimes went with them and entertained them. But I did not feel inclined to express to them the feeling in my mind. They too never made enquiries of their own accord. A rare few of them asked me affectionately now and then, 'Why do you look so dejected and weak today? Please tell us that.' One only came to know of my condition from others without my knowledge and, sending money to mother with anonymous letters from time to time, has put me under an eternal debt.

11. Temptation by women

"Knowing of my poverty, some of those boyhood friends of mine, who had lost their character in youth and were earning some money by dishonest means, found now an opportunity and tried to drag me into their company. Those among them, however, who had met with a sudden change of circumstances like me and adopted detestable means of earning their livelihood, actually felt, I found, pained for my sake. Mahamaya[1] too, did not lag behind. She also found it a good opportunity to tempt me. A wealthy woman had had an evil design on me for a long time. Thinking that it was an opportune moment, she sent word proposing that I might accept her property with herself and put an end to my poverty. She had to be rejected with bitter contempt and sternness. When another woman came to allure me in that way, I said to her, 'Ah, my child, how innumerable are the deeds you perpetrated so long for the satisfaction of this worthless body of yours! Death is very near at hand; have you made any provision for that time? Give up low-mindedness and call on the divine Lord.'

12. His mother scolded him for repeating the name of God

"In spite of all my trials, my faith in the existence of God did not vanish so long for all that pain and misery, nor did I doubt that 'God is good'. I used to wake up from sleep in the morning, remember the Lord and leave my bed taking His name. Then with firm determination and hope I used to

go from place to place in search of some means of earning money. One day I was leaving my bed as usual calling on the Lord, when my mother heard my words from the adjacent room and suddenly said, ‘Stop, lad; you have been constantly repeating the name of the divine Lord ever since your childhood, —and your divine Lord has left nothing undone!’ The words hurt me terribly. Cut to the quick, I pondered, ‘Does God actually exist? If so, does He hear the plaintive prayer of man? Why is there then no response to so much of prayer which I proffer to Him? Whence is so much of evil in the creation of a benign Creator? Why is there so much of calamity in the kingdom of one who is all bliss? Vidyasagar, pained at the suffering of others asked himself at one time, why, if God were all goodness and all bliss, lakhs of people fell into the terrible jaws of famine and died for want of a morsel of rice. That query resounded in my ears with the reverberation of the bitterest mockery. My heart was pierced through by a feeling of wounded love; and doubt in the existence of God assailed me.

13. Atheism due to the wounded feeling

“It was against my nature to do something and conceal it from others. Never from my childhood could I conceal, out of fear or from any other motive, even the least shade of thought, let alone my actions. Was it, therefore, surprising that I should now go aggressively forward to prove to the people that God did not exist and even if He did, there was no need to call on Him, for it was futile to do so? Consequently, a rumour soon spread that I had become an atheist and was mixing with people of bad character, and did not shrink from drinking and even from frequenting houses of ill-fame. Consequently, my heart, which had never been too docile from childhood, became steeled all the more on account of that false calumny. Even unasked, I was publicly telling one and all that not only had I no objection to anybody’s drinking wine or going to a brothel with a view to forgetting his hard lot in this world of pain and misery if he could feel happy thereby, but that I would myself do likewise the very day I was perfectly convinced of becoming happy for a moment like them by doing so and I would not retract my steps for fear of anybody.

14. All the devotees believed in Narendra's fall; but the Master remained unmoved

"News travels from ear to ear. It did not take long for these words of mine to get variously distorted and reach the Master's ears at Dakshineswar and those of his devotees in Calcutta. Some came to see me with a view to ascertaining the real state I was in, and they let me know by hints and suggestions that they were ready to believe something at least, if not all, of what they had heard. On knowing that they could regard me so low, I became terribly wounded at heart and proved that it was a great weakness to believe in God for fear of being punished. And quoting Hume, Mill, Bain, Comte and other Western philosophers, I started a fierce argumentation with them to prove that there was no evidence of the existence of God. Consequently, they went away, as I came to know afterwards, far more convinced of my fall than ever before. I was happy to know that and I thought that the Master would hear of it from them and would perhaps believe it too. The moment this thought crossed my mind, my heart was filled with a tragic wounded feeling. I came to the conclusion that there was no harm if he did so, inasmuch as people's opinions, good and bad, were worth so little. Later, however, I was surprised to hear that the Master had heard of it all from them but had not expressed himself either way at first; but when afterwards Bhavanath wept and said to him, 'Sir, it was beyond even our dream that such would be Narendra's lot', he excitedly said, 'Silence! you fellows! He, Mother has told me, can never be such; if you mention it again to me I'll not be able to put up with your presence.'

15. Gnawing unrest

"But of what avail was it to indulge in atheism on account of pride and egoism? The extraordinary experiences that I had from my childhood, more especially those I had had after my meeting the Master, arose in bright colours in my mind the next moment and I thought, 'God certainly exists and the means to realize Him also certainly exists; otherwise what is life for, what is it worth? That path has to be searched out however great the pain and misery the search might entail.' Time glided by and the mind

wavered and doubted and peace receded farther than ever. My worldly want showed no sign of abatement.

16. Narendra gained peace on account of an extraordinary vision

"The rainy season followed the summer. The same search for a job continued as before. One day, drenched in rain and having had no food for the whole day, I was returning home at night with tired legs and with my mind more weary than the body; the exhaustion was so great that, unable to proceed a single step further, I lay like a log of wood on the open verandah of a nearby house. I cannot say whether I lost consciousness altogether for some time; but I remember that thoughts and pictures of various colours, one after another, arose and vanished of themselves in my mind. I had no power to drive them away or to concentrate on one particular thought. I suddenly felt as if within my mind many screens were raised one after another by some providential power and saw in the innermost recesses of my heart the solutions of the problems which so long had baffled my intellect and distracted my mind;—the problems such as 'Why are there malign forces in the creation of the Benign? Where is the harmony between the stern justice and the infinite mercy of God?' I was beside myself with joy. Afterwards, when I resumed my walk home, I found that there was not an iota of fatigue in my body and that my mind was filled with infinite strength and peace. The day was then about to break.

17. His resolve to become a monk. The Master's extraordinary behaviour with him at Dakshineswar

"I became absolutely indifferent to the praise or blame of the world. And, firmly convinced that I was not born to earn money, serve the family and spend time in worldly enjoyment like people in general, I was secretly getting ready to renounce the world like my grandfather. When the day for starting on my itineracy was fixed, I heard the news that the Master would come to a devotee's house at Calcutta that day. I thought this was very good; I would see the Guru before I renounced home for ever. As soon as I met the Master, he importunately said to me, 'You must come to

Dakshineswar with me today.' I offered various excuses, but he was inexorable. I had to drive with him. There was not much talk in the carriage. After reaching Dakshineswar I sat with others in his room for some time, when the Master entered into ecstasy. In a moment he came suddenly to me and, taking my hand in his, began singing as tears flowed:

'I am afraid to speak
And am equally afraid not to speak.
The doubt rises in my mind
Lest I should lose you
(Ah my Rai[1], lest I should lose you)'

18. At the Master's request he gave up his resolve of leaving home for good

"I long kept back the surge of the strong emotions of my mind but could no more check their force. My breast too was flooded with tears like that of the Master. I was quite sure that the Master knew everything. All the others were astonished to see that behaviour of ours. Some asked the Master the reason for this after he came back to the normal state when he smiled and answered, 'It is something between ourselves.' Afterwards, sending away all others, he called me to him at night and said, 'I know, you have come to the world for Mother's work; you can never live a worldly life. But remain in your family for my sake as long as I live.' Saying so, the Master immediately began shedding tears again with his voice choked with emotion!

19. He thought of removing the poverty of the family with Providential help and requested the Master importunately for this. The Master asked him to go to the Kali temple and prey for it

"I took leave of the Master and returned home the next day. And immediately, a hundred thoughts about the family occupied my mind. I now began going from place to place as before and made various kinds of efforts. I worked in the office of an attorney, and translated a few books, as a result of which I earned a little money, and the household was being

managed somehow. But these were all temporary jobs; and in the absence of any permanent work no smooth arrangement for the maintenance of mother and brothers could be made. I remembered a little later that God would grant the Master's prayers. I must make him pray for me so that the suffering of my mother and brothers for want of food and clothing might be removed; he would never refuse to do so for my sake. I hurried to Dakshineswar and asked persistently that he must pray to the Mother that the pecuniary difficulty of my mother and brothers might be removed. The Master said to me affectionately, 'My child, I cannot say such words, you know. Why don't you yourself pray? You don't accept the Mother; that is why you suffer so much.' I replied, 'I have no knowledge of the Mother; please pray to Mother yourself for my sake. Pray you must; I will not leave you unless you do so.' The Master said with affection, 'I prayed to Mother many times indeed to remove your sufferings. But as you do not accept Mother, She does not grant the prayer. Well, today is Tuesday, a day especially sacred to Mother. Mother will, I say, grant you whatever you ask for. Go to the temple tonight and bowing down to Her, pray for a boon. My affectionate Mother is the Power of Brahman; She is pure Consciousness embodied. She has given birth to the universe according to Her will; what can She not do which She wills?'

20. Narendra had the vision of the divine Mother and forgot the universe

"A firm faith arose in my mind that all the sufferings would certainly come to an end as soon as I prayed to the Mother, inasmuch as the Master had said so. I waited for the night in great expectancy. The night arrived at last. Three hours of the night had elapsed when the Master asked me to go to the holy temple. As I was going, a sort of profound inebriation possessed me; I was reeling. A firm conviction gripped me that I would actually see Mother and hear Her words. I forgot all other things, and became completely merged in that thought alone. Coming into the temple, I saw that Mother was actually pure Consciousness, was actually living and was really the fountain-head of infinite love and beauty. My heart swelled with loving devotion; and, beside myself with bliss, I made repeated salutations to Her, praying, 'Mother, grant me discrimination, grant me detachment, grant me

divine knowledge and devotion, ordain that I may always have an unobstructed vision of you:' My heart was flooded with peace. The whole universe completely disappeared and Mother alone remained filling my heart.

21. Thrice he went to the Kali temple to pray for the removal of poverty and each time he prayed for Viveka etc.

"No sooner had I returned to the Master than he asked, 'Did you pray to Mother for the removal of your worldly wants?' Startled at his question, I said, 'No, sir; I forgot to do so. So, what should I do now?' He said, 'Go quickly again and pray to Her.' I started for the temple once more and, coming to Mother's presence, became inebriated again. I forgot everything, bowed down to Her repeatedly and prayed for the realization of divine knowledge and devotion before I came back. The Master smiled and said, 'Well, did you tell Her this time?' I was startled again and said,. 'No, sir; hardly had I seen Mother when I forgot everything on account of the influence of an indescribable divine Power and prayed for Knowledge and devotion only. What's to be done now?' The Master said, 'Silly boy, could you not control yourself a little and make that prayer? Go once more if you can, and tell Her those words. Quick!' I started a third time; but as soon as I entered the temple a formidable sense of shame occupied my heart. I thought, 'What a trifling thing have I come to ask of Mother! It is, as the Master often says, just like the folly of asking a king, having received his grace, for gourds and pumpkins. Ah, how low is my intellect!' Overpowered with shame and aversion I bowed down to Her over and over again saying, 'I don't want anything else, Mother, do grant me divine knowledge and devotion only.' When I came out from the temple, it occurred to me that it was certainly the play of the Master, otherwise how was it that I could not speak the words though I came to pray to Her as many as three times? Then I insisted that he must ensure for my mother and brothers freedom from lack of food and clothing, saying, 'It is certainly you who made me intoxicated that way.' He said affectionately to me, 'My child, I can never offer such a prayer for anyone; it does not indeed come out of my mouth. You would, I told you, get from Mother whatever you wanted. But you

could not ask Her for it; you are not meant for worldly happiness. What am I to do?' I said, 'That won't do, Sir. You must utter the prayer for my sake; it is my firm conviction that they will be free from all sufferings if you only say so.' As I kept on persisting, he said, 'Well, they will never be in want of plain food and clothing'."

22. Narendra got faith in the worship of God in symbols and images. Great was the joy of the Master at this

What has been said above is, it is superfluous to say, an important event in the life of Narendranath. The hidden meaning of the Motherhood of God and of His worship in symbols and images had not been comprehended by him so long. Before this he had looked upon the images of the deities installed in the temples with contempt, never with love and respect. The whole mystery of such worship now became clear to his mind and made his spiritual life fuller and richer. The Master felt an unspeakable joy on account of that. The reader will understand this when we mention what a friend[1] of ours saw and heard at Dakshineswar when he came on the morrow. He said:

23. What Vaikunthanath said about the Master's happiness over this

"I became acquainted with one Tarapada Ghosh, as he and I served in the same office. Narendranath was a great friend of Tarapada. Therefore, I saw Narendra sometimes in that office. Besides, one day Tarapada told me in the course of conversation that Paramahamsa Deva loved Narendra dearly. Still I did not try to get acquainted with Narendra. One day at noon I came to Dakshineswar and saw the Master sitting alone in his room and Narendra sleeping on one side, outside the room. The Master's face was beaming with delight. No sooner had I approached and bowed down to him than he pointed to Narendra and said, 'Look here; that boy is very good; his name is Narendra; he had not accepted the divine Mother before, it was only last night that he did. He was in straitened circumstances. I, therefore, advised him to ask Mother for money; he however could not ask Her for it; he said he "felt ashamed". Coming back from the temple he asked me to teach him

a song addressed to Mother. I taught him the song,[1] "Mother, Thou art the saviour." He sang that song the whole night. So, he is sleeping now. (Smiling with joy) Narendra has accepted Kali; it is very good; is that not so?' Seeing that he was happy like a child on account of that, I said, 'Yes, sir; it is very good.' A little afterwards he smiled and said again, 'Narendra has accepted Mother; it is very good; what do you say?' He thus expressed his joy, saying it over and over again.

24. An example that the Master regarded Narendra as his very own

"Narendra came and sat beside the Master in the room at about four in the afternoon, when he awoke. It seemed that Narendra would now take leave of him and return to Calcutta. But the Master entered into ecstasy as soon as he saw him and touching Narendra's body with his, sat almost on his lap, saying, 'What I see is that this (his body) I am and this (Narendra's body) too, I am. Truly I say, I see no difference. Just as the water of the Ganga seems to be divided into two parts when a stick is placed on it, but actually there are no divisions; one whole mass of water exists; so it is here. Do you understand it? What exists but Mother? What do you say?' Speaking thus he suddenly said, 'I'll smoke.' I hurried to prepare a smoke for him and gave him the Hookah. Smoking a puff or two, he returned the Hookah and saying, 'I will smoke with the bowl', took it in his hands and began smoking. Smoking three or four puffs, he held it near Narendra's mouth and said, 'Just have a puff, a puff through my hands.' Narendra shrank, at which the Master said, 'What ignorance! Are you and I different? This am I, that also am I.' Saying so, he held both his hands again in front of Narendra's mouth with a view to making him smoke. Thus compelled, Narendra smoked two or three puffs with his mouth through the Master's hands and then stopped. Seeing him stop smoking, the Master himself was again going to smoke. Narendra said hurriedly, 'Sir, wash your hands and then smoke.' But the Master paid no heed to the words. He said, 'You wretch, you are awfully conscious of differences', and smoked with his hands that had been touched by Narendra's lips and spoke many things in that ecstatic mood. The Master regarded all things of which a portion had been given to any one else, as practically touched by the mouth, i.e.,

polluted and could not take them. Seeing him act in that way towards Narendra that day, I was aghast and thought how near to his heart Narendra was.

25. Vaikuntha came to Calcutta with Narendra

"Our talks went on till it was 8 p.m. when we saw the Master's ecstasy came to an end. Then we took leave of him and walked back to Calcutta. Afterwards on many occasions we heard Narendra say, "Ever since our first meeting, it was Master alone, and no one else, not even my own mother and brothers who always had uniform faith in me. That faith and that love of his have bound me to him for ever. It was the Master alone who knew how to love and he did love, while others of the world but feign love for the satisfaction of their self-interest."

Footnote

1. The tempting aspect of the divine Mother.—Tr.

1. There is a pun on the two words “ha rai”; when separate they mean “Ah Rai” (Radha); and when not, they mean, “lest I should lose”—Tr.

1. Vaikunthanath Sannyal.

1. Thou art the saviour, O Mother!

Beyond the cause of all things, Thou art the substratum of all the three

Gunas.

I know Thee, O Mother, O bestower of mercy on the poor.

As the destroyer of irremovable misery in great distress.

Thou art in water, Thou art in land, Thou alone art the primeval Cause,

O Mother!

With forms and without,

Thou existest in all hearts and in all eyes.

Thou art Sandhya*, Thou art Gayatri

*, Thou art the support of the universe, O Mother, Thou takest us—helpless ones—across the shoreless sea of the world, The delighter of the heart of the eternally existing Siva. * The sacred verses for the daily prayer of the Hindus.—Tr.

CHAPTER IX
THE CIRCLE OF DEVOTEES OF THE MASTER AND NARENDRANATH

1. The marked devotees of the Master came by 1884

All those devotees of the Master mentioned before, whose coming to Dakshineswar he had seen in his Yogic visions, arrived there before the close of 1884. For, Purna came to him in the beginning of 1885. After bestowing his grace on him he said, “With Purna’s coming, the coming of that class of devotees whom I saw in visions is completed. No one else of this class will come hereafter.”

2. The Master’s behaviour with this class of devotees

Again, many of the above mentioned class of devotees came to the Master during the period between the middle of 1883 and that of 1884. Narendra was then struggling against dire poverty to maintain his family; and Rakhal had gone to Vrindavan for some time. To the devotees beside him the Master would say regarding the coming of some one of those devotees even before he came, “One belonging to this place is coming today from this direction (pointing to a particular direction).’ Or as soon as one came, he would receive him lovingly and say, “You are a person belonging to this place.” In the case of a few fortunate ones, he felt special attraction and became eager to see and feed them and have a religious talk with them in seclusion. He would observe the nature and past impressions of one and introduce him to another devotee who had come before and had similar impressions, so that the former might have the opportunity of spending his leisure in religious discussion with the latter. Again, he would

visit the houses of some such devotees unasked and would please their guardians with good conversation so that they might not forbid their wards to visit him now and then, thus clearing their way to come to him.

3. Inspired with the divine mood the Master touched, initiated or dealt otherwise with the devotees according to each one's fitness

As soon as, or shortly after, such a devotee came, he called him aside and asked him to meditate and then he touched under the influence of divine inspiration certain parts of his body such as chest, tongue, etc. On account of this divine touch, the devotee's mind would become indrawn and lose consciousness partially or wholly. And the past accumulated religious impressions of the devotee would become suddenly active and engage him deeply in the realisation of God. Consequently, on account of that touch, one would have the vision of a divine light or of the luminous figure of a god or goddess, another would be in deep meditation or feel a bliss never experienced before, a third would have the knots of his heart suddenly loosened and removed and experience an intense eagerness for God-realization; a fourth would be inspired with spiritual emotions and enter into Savikalpa Samadhi, and a rare one would get a foretaste of Nirvikalpa Samadhi. There was no limit to the number of persons who came to him and thus had the vision of luminous figures. We heard from the Master himself that Tarak one day thus experienced a great eagerness and a wailing welling up in his mind, as a result of which all the knots of his heart were loosened. Owing to that effectual touch, junior Naren entered into ecstasy during his meditation on the formless God. But the experience of a foretaste of the Nirvikalpa Samadhi on account of that touch was seen in the life of Narendranath alone. Besides touching the devotees in that way, the Master initiated some of them in Mantras. At the time of initiation he did not examine the horoscopes of the disciples nor did he perform worship etc., like ordinary preceptors. But observing with the help of his Yogic vision their impressions accumulated during the past lives, he pointed out their Mantras saying, "This is your Mantra." We have heard from him that he bestowed his grace in that way on Niranjan, Tejchandra, Vaikuntha and some others. He did not initiate any one in a Sakta or a Vaishnava Mantra

merely because that person was born in a Sakta or a Vaishnava family. After a careful scrutiny of the inner tendencies he would sometimes initiate a Sakti or Vishnu worshipper with a Vishnu or Sakti Mantra. It is therefore evident that he observed every one's tendency and prescribed everything accordingly.

4. What the Master's divine touch proved

It is recorded in the scriptures that great souls can, by their will or touch, impart spiritual power to others and turn the course of their minds to higher channels. Even the lives of prostitutes, lecherous persons and other perpetrators of sinful actions have thus been changed by the influence of great souls, not to speak of those of the disciples of their inner circles. The manifestation of that power is seen more or less in the life of each of the great souls such as Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Chaitanya who have all along been worshipped as incarnations in the world. But of what avail is it that it is so written in the scriptures? Having no direct knowledge of the extraordinary actions of the personages of that class for a very long time, the world totally lost its faith in them. Even the faith in God is very often regarded nowadays as a sign of mental weakness born of superstition, and even more so the faith in His incarnations. It was very necessary in the modern age for an extraordinary person like the Master to be born in this world in order to remove that lack of faith from the minds of men in general and make them spiritual. Seeing the manifestation of that power in him, we are now coming to have faith in the similar powers of the great souls of the past. Even if one may not accept the Master as an incarnation of God, one cannot, when one sees that power in him, deny that he was an extraordinary person belonging to the same class as Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Chaitanya and other great souls.

5. The devotees were under the impression that the Master was a person of their own moods. The Master's behaviour with them

Among those devotees whom the Master had known before they actually came there, were people of various ages, classes and spiritual moods, such

as the young and the old, householders and monks, worshippers of God with form and of God without form. In spite of all these differences, there was one common point observable in them all. Each one of them had an unshakable faith in and single-minded devotion to his own path of Sadhana and the chosen Ideal and was ever ready to undergo any amount of sacrifice for the realization of God. The Master tied one and all to himself with the cord of his love and guarded everybody's particular spiritual mood and behaved towards him in a way that made him think that he, although an expert in all religious doctrines, had greater love for the path along which the devotee himself was proceeding. There was no limit to the disciples' love and devotion to the Master on account of that impression of theirs. Again, as soon as they transcended the narrow circles of sectarianism etc., one by one, and came to possess liberal views by virtue of his company and under the influence of his instruction and teaching, they were astonished and charmed to see this perfection. We mention here, by way of an example, an ordinary event.

6. Balaram Basu —an example of understanding the Master better as his catholicity grew wider

Balaram Basu of Baghbazar was born in a Vaishnava family and was himself a great follower of that faith. Living in the world, he was untouched by it, and though possessing great wealth he never had pride in his heart. He used to spend four or five hours in worship and religious study every morning and was so careful in observing the virtue of non-injury that he never hurt even insects, birds, etc., for any reason whatever. As soon as the Master saw him for the first time, he received him lovingly, as if he was already familiar with him. The Master said, "He is a devotee of the inner circle of the great lord Sri Chaitanya. He belongs to this place (meaning himself). I witnessed in ecstasy how the great lord Chaitanya together with the revered souls, Advaita and Nityananda, brought about a flood of Hari's name in the country and inebriated a number of men, women and children by means of Sankirtan sung by a wonderful party, in which I saw him (Balaram)."

7. How Balaram behaved when he met the Master first. His spiritual progress

Keeping the Master's company, Balaram underwent wonderful transformations as he went forward in the spiritual realm with a rapid step. Going beyond the limit of external worship and other kinds of ritualistic devotion enjoined by the scriptures, he could, in a short time, live in the world completely reliant on God and able to discriminate the real from the unreal. Offering his all—his own life, wife, son, wealth, etc., at His lotus feet and living like a servant of His in His world, ever ready to carry out His commands, Balaram came to have only one aim in life, namely, to live in the holy company of the Master as much as possible. He could not remain satisfied with himself enjoying the peace born of the grace of the Master, but busied himself with making suitable arrangements for his friends and relatives to come in contact with the Master and to enjoy the bliss derived therefrom. Many people thus felt blessed to have the Master as their refuge on account of Balaram's eagerness.

8. Balaram's doubt whether to change his opinion about the virtue of non-injury

Like his external worship, Balaram's opinion about the observance of the virtue of non-injury also got changed in a short time. Before that time, he never used to hurt even mosquitoes etc., though they distracted his mind at the time of worship. It would, he thought, destroy his piety altogether. Now, one day during this time, the thought suddenly crossed his mind that religion consisted in making the infinitely distracted mind concentrated on God, and not in always engaging oneself in saving the lives of mosquitoes, insects, birds, etc. Therefore, if the mind could be helped to concentrate on Hari for a short time by the killing of a few mosquitoes, that act should, far from being considered irreligious, be regarded as highly beneficial to man's end in life. Balaram said, "The long-standing eagerness of the mind to observe the virtue of non-injury got a rude shock at that thought; but the mind, assailed by doubts, found it difficult to be swayed by the new thought. I, therefore, started for Dakshineswar to consult the Master about it. On my way I went on thinking the matter over, 'Did I ever see him kill

mosquitoes etc., like others?' I could not remember such an act; as far as I could see, he was more devoted to the observance of the vow of non-injury than I. I recollected that, when one day he saw a man treading a field, green with newly grown grass, he felt as if the man was stamping on his breast and became restless with pain—the Power and Consciousness giving vitality to the field of grass and pervading it through and through, appeared so clearly to him! The decision forced itself upon me that it was quite unnecessary to ask him the question and that it was my mind that was playing me false. Let me, however, go and see him, the mind will then become purified, I thought.

9. His doubt removed by the Master's uncommon behaviour

"I reached Dakshineswar and came to the door of the Master's room. But, before I entered it, I was astounded to see from a distance what he was doing. I saw him bringing out bugs from his own bed and killing them! As soon as I approached, and bowed down to him, he said, 'There are many bugs breeding in the pillow. They bite me day and night, produce distraction of the mind and disturb sleep. I am, therefore, killing them.' There was no need to ask a question. My mind became free from doubt on hearing his words and seeing his action. But, astonished, I thought, 'I have been coming to him at all hours and without notice for the last two or three years; I came in the day-time and returned at night; I came at dusk and took leave only when the night had advanced more than three hours. I came and went thus three or four times every week. But never did I happen to see him do such an act. How could it be? The solution is this. I was convinced that my spiritual mood would have suffered had I seen him do so before; I would have lost faith in him. The supremely compassionate Master, therefore, never acted thus in my presence."

10. The circle of the Master's devotees and the boy-devotees

Besides the devotees whom the Master had seen in visions before, many men and women came to Dakshineswar during this time to see him and have peace. He received these also affectionately and blessed them, some

by instruction and others by a touch in a state of divine inspiration. As time thus passed on, the Master's circle of devotees grew wider with him for the centre of attraction. He took greater care to mould the spiritual lives of the boys and unmarried young men who were among them. He pointed out the reason for this on many occasions: "The perfect realization of God can never be attained if one does not apply one's whole mind to it. The boys have with them their whole minds which have not become distracted by wife, sons, wealth, honour, fame and other worldly objects. If they try now, they can offer their whole minds to God and be blessed with His vision. That is why I have a greater zeal in guiding them on the path of spiritual realization." Whenever the Master found an opportunity, he took each of them to a secluded place and instructed him in the higher methods of spiritual realization, such as Yoga, meditation, etc., and advised him to practise perfect continence by not entering into matrimony. He pointed out also to him his own Object of worship according to his fitness and taught him his own spiritual relation of Santa, Dasya or any other mood, which, when properly established between him and his chosen Ideal, would easily take him forward on the path of progress.

11. The method of teaching adopted by the Master with regard to the householder devotees and men and women in general

Let not any man think that Sri Ramakrishna had less grace on and compassion for house-holder devotees when he hears of his greater zeal in teaching the boys. He did not ask them to practise and study the higher spiritual truths, only because he knew that many of them had no time or capacity to do so. But he guided them constantly so that they might gradually diminish their lust or desire for gold and have the ideal of their lives achieved in due course by realizing God through the path of devotion. He taught them first of all to live in God's world and not in their own and, while doing their duties, to give up all attachment, all sense of "mine", like servants working in the houses of the rich. The Master encouraged them to observe continence according to their capacity. "Husband and wife", he observed, "should offer their minds to God and live in the world like brother and sister when one or two children are born." Besides, he directed

them always to tread the path of truth and move with all in a simple, artless way; to give up luxury and remain contented with "plain food and clothing" only, fixing their gaze steadfastly on God; and to remember and think on God daily at the two junctures of the day and night and perform worship and Japa and sing Kirtan. He advised those householders who were unable to practise even that, to sit in a secluded place at dusk and take the name of Hari while clapping their hands. He advised them also to congregate with their relatives and friends and sing the name of God. At the time of giving instruction to men and women in general, he was heard to say, "Devotion according to Narada, is the only path in the Kaliyuga; people will be saved if they but sing loudly the name of God. People of the Kaliyuga depend on food for their life; they are shortlived and of meagre powers; that is why such an easy path to the realization of God has been prescribed for them." Again, sometimes he would say, (lest they should lose heart by hearing of Yoga, meditation, etc., the difficult paths of Sadhana), "A man who has turned a monk must, of course, call on the divine Lord. For, it is for this very purpose that he has renounced all the duties of the world. What credit or uniqueness is there in his doing so? But God becomes highly pleased with one who remembers Him even once while he carries the very heavy load of duties towards father, mother, wife, son and others in the world. God thinks, 'It is no small credit on the part of this man that he can turn to Me even for a short while, in spite of so heavy a burden lying on his shoulders. This man is indeed a hero among devotees'."

12. The Master gave Narendra the highest place amongst the devotees

Words fail us to express how high a station the Master gave to Narendra even among the especial devotees seen by him in visions, let alone the ordinary class of devotees, the newcomers. Pointing but some amongst the devotees previously seen in visions, he said, "They are Isvarakotis, in other words, they have been born in this world to accomplish a particular work of the divine Lord." Comparing Narendra with those few men, one day he said to us, "Naren is a lotus of a thousand petals, while the other few are lotuses no doubt, but of ten, fifteen or at most twenty petals only." He said on another occasion, "So many men have come here; but no one else like

Naren has come." It was also seen that no one could so correctly understand and express as Narendra did the import of the Master's words and the extraordinary actions of his wonderful life. Hearing the Master's words from Narendra even at that time, we were astonished and were led to think, "Ah! We also heard these words from the Master but could not understand that they had such deep meaning." We mention here one such case as an example.

13. An example showing Narendra's deep under standing of the Master's words. "To serve Jiva as Siva".

Some time in 1884, a friend of ours came to Dakshineswar and found the Master sitting in his room surrounded by devotees. Narendra also was present there. Various spiritual talks, interspersed with merriment, were going on. There arose the topic of the Vaishnava religion in the course or the conversation and, explaining briefly the essence of that doctrine to all, the Master said, "That doctrine teaches that one should always be careful to observe three things, namely, a taste for God's name, kindness to all beings and the worship of Vaishnavas. God is what the name is; knowing the non-difference between the name and the possessor of the name, one should always take His name with love and devotion; knowing the identity of the devotee and the Divine, of the Vaishnava and Krishna, one should always respect, worship and salute holy men, the devotees; and one should have the conviction in one's heart that the whole universe belongs to Krishna; therefore, compassion for all beings is what one should practise." No sooner had he uttered the words, "compassion for all beings", than he suddenly went into ecstasy. Regaining partial normal consciousness in a short time, he continued, "Talk of compassion for beings! Will you, all little animals, bestow compassion on beings? You wretch, who are you to bestow it? No, no; not compassion to Jivas but service to them as Siva."

14. Narendra found a wonderful light in those words of the Master and explained it

All went on listening to those words of the Master spoken in that ecstatic mood; but none could detect and understand their hidden import at that time. It was Narendranath alone who, coming out of the room at the end of the Master's ecstasy said, "Ah, What a wonderful light have I got today from the Master's words! In synthesizing the Vedantic knowledge, which was generally regarded as dry, austere and even cruel, with sweet devotion to the Lord, what a new mellowed means of experiencing the Truth has he revealed today! In order to attain the non-dual knowledge, we have been told so long, one should have to renounce the world and the company of men altogether and retire to the forest and mercilessly uproot and throw away love, devotion and other soft and tender emotions from the heart. Formerly when the aspirant tried to attain that knowledge in the old way, he regarded the whole universe and each person in it as obstacles to the path of religion and contracting therefore a hatred for them, he more often than not went astray. But, from what the Master in ecstasy said today, it is gathered that the Vedanta of the forest can be brought to human habitation and that it can be applied in practice to the work-a-day world. Let man do everything he is doing; there is no harm in that; it is sufficient for him, first, to be fully convinced that it is God who exists, manifested before him as the universe and all the beings in it. Those, with whom he comes in contact every moment of his life, whom he loves, respects and honours, and to whom his sympathy and kindness flow, are all His parts, are all He Himself. If he can thus look upon all the persons of the world as Siva, how can there be an occasion for him to regard himself as superior to them or cherish anger and hatred for them or an arrogant attitude towards them, yes, or to be even kind to them? Thus serving the Jivas as Siva, he will have his heart purified and be convinced in a short time that he himself is also a part of God, the eternally pure, awake and free, and bliss Absolute.

"We get a great light on the path of devotion too from these words of the Master. Until he sees God in all beings, the aspirant has not the remotest chance of realizing true transcendental devotion. If the devout aspirant serves the Jivas as Siva or Narayana, he, it is superfluous to say, will see God in all, attain true devotion and have the aim of his life fulfilled in a short time. Those aspirants who adopt the path of action or that of concentration for the realization of God, will also get much light from these

words. For, as embodied beings can never rest for a moment without doing work, it goes without saying that it is only the work of the service of Jivas as Siva that should be performed, and action done in that spirit will enable them to reach the goal sooner than otherwise. If the divine Lord ever grants me an opportunity, I'll proclaim everywhere in the world this wonderful truth I have heard today. I will preach this truth to the learned and the ignorant, to the rich and the poor, to the Brahmins and the Chandalas."

The extraordinary Master always entered the realm of ecstasy in this way and constantly brought wonderful light regarding knowledge, love, Yoga and Karma to illumine the path of human life. But unfortunate as we were, we could not then comprehend the implication of his words. It was the supremely intelligent Narendranath who understood those divine words as far as it was humanly possible and expressed from time to time their sublime significance to our amazement.

CHAPTER X
THE FESTIVAL AT PANIHATI

1. Narendra became a teacher

We have said before, how Narendranath took refuge in the Master and how the Master blessed the family to be ever above suffering from want of plain food and clothing. Narendra's worldly circumstances changed gradually thenceforward; and although they were not affluent, the family never again had to experience the sort of dire poverty they had experienced before. A branch of the Metropolitan School was opened at Champatala in Calcutta shortly after the event; and he was appointed the Headmaster there through the kindness of Pandit Isvara Chandra Vidyasagar. He worked as a teacher there for about three or four months, probably from the month of May of the year 1885.

2. The enmity of his kinsmen; the Master's in flammatory affection of the throat. Narendra's resignation from service

Although the worldly circumstances of Narendra improved a little, he was harassed a great deal now on account of the enmity of his kinsmen. They found an opportunity and occupied the best houses and the best places of his ancestral property by hook or by crook. He had therefore to leave his house for some time and live in his grandmother's at Ramtanu Basu's Lane. And, in order to come by his just right he instituted a case in the High Court and got everything settled. Nimai Charan Basu, an attorney and his father's friend, helped him much in this case. Now that he had to spend much time in looking after the case and preparing for the impending B.L. Examination, he had to resign his post of teachership after three or four months only. There was also a graver reason for it—the Master was now attacked by an

inflammatory affection of the throat and as it increased gradually Narendra felt the necessity of himself being present with him and making arrangements for the Master's nursing, treatment, etc.

3. The Master fell ill on account of taking too much ice

Seeing the Master suffer from the excessive heat in the year 1885, the devotees requested him to use ice. Observing that he felt relieved by taking ice, many of them, when coming to Dakshineswar, now began to bring it. He too liked to take it with sugared drinks, and made merry like a boy. But there started a pain in his throat when he had used it for a month or two. It was probably the month of April when he felt the pain for the first time.

4. The disease increased when he talked much or was in Bhava samadhi

More than a month elapsed, and the pain did not abate; and scarcely had the month of May come when the disease developed new symptoms. It increased when he spoke much or went into ecstasy. It was at first diagnosed as the inflammation of the pharynx due to cold and an ordinary plaster was prescribed. But finding it inefficacious after a few days' use, a devotee called in Dr. Rakhal of Bowbazar who was known to be an expert in such diseases. The doctor diagnosed the disease and prescribed an unguent and medicine for applying outside and inside the throat. He asked us to see as far as possible that the Master did not talk much for some days and did not often go into ecstasy.

5. The story of the festival at Panihati

The thirteenth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Jyaishtha was drawing near. An annual fair of the Vaishnava community is held on this day in the village of Panihati on the Ganga, a few miles north of Calcutta. The story of the burning renunciation and detachment of Raghunath Das Goswami, one of the companions of the great lord Chaitanya, is well known throughout Bengal. Leaving behind a very beautiful wife and immense riches, Raghunath, the only son of his father, came to Santipur to take

refuge at the feet of Sri Chaitanya, who sent him back to await at home the ripening of the too insipient dispassion for worldly life. In implicit obedience to this command of the great lord, Raghunath returned home and keeping hidden in his heart the strong desire for renouncing the world, began helping his father and uncle in managing the property and other worldly matters. Although he acted thus, he could not do without seeing the companions of Sri Chaitanya now and then. He used to visit them with the permission of his father, pass a few days in their holy company and return home. Days thus passed on. Raghunath spent his time in the world, biding his time for renouncing it. In course of time Sri Gauranga was initiated into Sannyasa and lived at Puri. Placed in charge of the preaching of the Vaishnava religion, Nityananda made the village of Khardaha, situated on the Ganga, the chief centre of his work and travelled far and wide to many places of Bengal singing and preaching the name of God and initiating many people into that faith.

Once when Nityananda with his friends and disciples of the inner circle was staying and preaching at the village of Panihati, Raghunath came to see him and was asked by him to feed him and the circle of devotees with flattened rice, curd, milk, sugar, plantain, etc., mixed into a paste and offered to the Deity. Raghunath gladly consented and gave a sumptuous feast to the hundreds of people who had come to see the revered Nityananda on the bank of the Ganga on that occasion. When Raghunath went to bow down to Nityananda and take leave of him at the end of the festival, the latter embraced him in a partial trance and said, “The time is now ripe; if you now renounce the world and go to the great lord at Puri, he will accept you and will place you under Sanatana Goswami for your training with a view to perfecting your spiritual life.” Raghunath leaped in joy at that command of Nityananda; he paid a short visit to his house and renounced the world for ever and went to Puri. Raghunath left the place, but in commemoration of this event the Vaishnava devotees hold an annual fair in the village of Panihati on the Ganga, in the name of Gauranga and Nityananda with a view to having similar grace of the divine Lord. This afterwards came to be known to the devotees as the “Festival of the flattened rice at Panihati”.

6. The Master's desire to go and witness that festival

The Master had, we have mentioned elsewhere, joined that festival many times before. But, owing to various reasons, he had not done so for a few years since his devotees, educated in the Western ways, came to him. He expressed the desire of going and witnessing the festival this year together with his devotees and said to us, "A fair of bliss—a veritable mart of the name of Hari—assembles there on that day; you 'Young Bengal'[1] have never seen such a thing. Let us go and witness it." Although a party of devotees like Ramchandra and others became very happy at the proposal, some of them thought of the pain in his throat and tried to dissuade him. In order to satisfy them he said, "I'll take here a little food early and return after staying there an hour or two; that will not do much harm. The pain in the throat might increase if I have much of ecstasy, but I will be careful to keep it in check." All objections were thrown to the winds at those words of his and the devotees began to arrange for his trip to Panihati.

7. The preparations on the day of the festival before starting for Panihati

It was the thirteenth day of the bright fortnight, the day of the Panihati festival. About twenty-five devotees in two boats came to Dakshineswar at 9 a.m. Some came there on foot. A separate boat hired for the Master was seen tied at the Ghat. A few women devotees had come very early in the morning. They joined the Holy Mother in arranging a meal for the Master and the devotees. All took their food and were ready to start by 10 a.m.

8. Why the Holy Mother did not accompany the party

When the Master had taken his meal, the Holy Mother sent word to him through a woman devotee asking him if she too might go. The Master said to the devotee, "You all are coming, I see; let her come if she likes." When the words were thus reported to her, the Holy Mother said, "Many people are going with him and there will also be a very big crowd; it will be very difficult for me to get down from the boat and witness the festival; I'll not go." The Holy Mother gave up the idea of going, fed the two or three

women devotees who had decided to go and asked them to go in the same boat with the Master.

9. What they saw on reaching the place of the festival

Many people were seen to have assembled round the old pipal tree on the bank of the Ganga when the party reached Panihati at about 12 noon. The Vaishnava devotees were enjoying the bliss of Sankirtan in many places. But, although they did so, many of them did not seem to have actually lost themselves in the singing of the name of the divine Lord. It was everywhere a sort of lifeless affair. Both before and after arriving at Panihati, Narendranath, Balaram, Girishchandra, Ramchandra, Mahendranath and other principal devotees earnestly and repeatedly requested the Master not to mix with any Kirtan party and get inebriated. For, if he did so, his ecstasy would be inevitable and the pain in his throat would increase thereby.

10. Mani Sen's house

The Master got down from the boat and went direct to the house of Mani Sen. Happy at his coming, all the household of Mani Babu bowed to him and took him to the parlour and seated him there. It was a room well-furnished in the English fashion with tables, chairs, sofas, carpets, etc. After only ten or fifteen minutes' rest there, he got up with all others to pay obeisance to the Lord, Sri Radhakanta, in the temple of that family.

11. His temple

The temple was situated very near the parlour. We came direct through the side door to the music-hall adjoining the temple and were blessed to see the pair of images of Radha and Krishna. The images were beautiful. Gazing on the images for a while, the Master made salutations to them in a divine semi-conscious mood. Coming five or six steps down from the music-hall, one reaches the quadrangular temple courtyard with suites of rooms on all the four sides. The gate is so situated that one sees the images as soon as one enters the courtyard of the temple. When the Master was

making salutations, a Kirtan party entered the courtyard through that gate and commenced singing. It appeared that each party that came to the fair, started singing Kirtan in the temple courtyard first and then went to the bank of the Ganga and enjoyed the chanting of the Lord's name. A tall, fat, middle-aged man of fair complexion with the sacred thread, and a tuft of hair on his head, his body adorned with sandal-paste, marks of the sacred wheel, etc., came to the courtyard then, counting beads in a small bag. With an upper garment hanging from his shoulder and a white "Rally's 49" cloth without coloured border, washed clean, put on in a very tidy manner and having a bunch of coins in a fold of that cloth at the waist, he seemed at the very first sight to be a tramp of a Goswami who had come out fully dressed in the fair to make a little money playing on the faith of others. In order to excite the Kirtan party and probably to show himself off to the new-comers as a great devotee, he came and immediately joined the party and began to roar, dance and gesticulate as if he were in trance.

12. The Master danced during Bhavasamadhi

The Master stood on one side of the temple after making salutations. Smiling to see the Goswami feigning ecstasy and the orderly disposition of his dress and ornaments, he said to Narendra and other devotees beside him in a low voice, "Mark the hypocrisy." There was seen a gentle smile on the lips of everyone at that merry remark of his. And all were free from anxiety to think that he had kept himself under control without experiencing any spiritual emotion. But the next moment, before the devotees had any idea of the how and when of the matter, the Master, in the twinkling of an eye, had come down in one bound to the middle of the Kirtan party and gone into ecstasy losing all consciousness. The devotees then hurried down from the music-hall and stood round him. He sometimes gained partial normal consciousness and danced with the stride of a lion; and sometimes lost outward awareness and stood still. Dancing under the influence of spiritual emotions, he was now proceeding, now receding with a rapid step to the timing of the music. He seemed like a fish swimming about in great delight in a sea of bliss. Each movement of his limbs clearly indicated it; but it is impossible to give expression to the wonderful manifestation of that fully

natural and unrestrained power of bliss where beauty and tenderness had blended together in a sweet harmony. We have witnessed many beautiful dances full of gesture by both male and female dancers but never did we have a glimpse of that happy synthesis of power and beauty as we did in the unrestrained and yet perfectly balanced dance of the Master, when he lost himself in the divine moods of spiritual emotions. When his body, overflowing with the intense joy of divine feelings, swayed to and fro in quick steps, one seriously wondered whether it was made of any solid, physical substance at all. One felt as if waves, mountain high, rose in a sea of bliss and were going forward carrying everything before them and would merge that very moment, liquid in liquid, and vanish out of sight. No one had to explain how great a difference there existed between the genuine and the counterfeit. The Kirtan party did not turn their eyes to the Goswami any more but surrounded the Master and sang with zeal and happiness multiplied a hundredfold.

13. On the way to Raghava Pandit's house

About half an hour elapsed this way when, seeing the Master in a somewhat normal consciousness, the devotees tried to take him away from the midst of the Kirtan party. All should, it was decided, return to the boats after paying their obeisance to the pair of images and the Salagrama,[1] which Pandit Raghava, a companion of the great lord Sri Chaitanya, had daily worshipped in his house, situated a little more than a mile from that place. The Master consented and started with the devotees from Mani Sen's temple. But the Kirtan party did not desist from following him. They began coming behind, singing the name of God with great fervour. The Master went forward a few steps only, when he stood motionless in ecstasy. When he regained partial consciousness, the devotees requested him to walk on. He took three or four steps and was in ecstasy once more. As this happened over and over again, the devotees were compelled to proceed very slowly.

14. The wonderful beauty of the Master in Bhavasamadhi

We do not remember to have ever seen the divine effulgent beauty which we saw that day in the person of the Master in ecstasy. It is not in human power to describe that wonderful beauty of his divine person. We never imagined before that such a change could come on a man's body in the twinkling of an eye under the influence of spiritual emotions. His tall figure as seen by us daily, looked much taller and appeared to be as light as a body seen in a dream. Getting brighter, the slightly dark colour of his body turned into a fair complexion. Brightened by the divine mood and lit up by an incomparable smile playing on his slightly parted lips, his face beamed with glory, peace, bliss and compassion, and spread a wonderful light which illumined all sides. Bewitched, as it were, by the sight, the vast congregation forgot all other things and followed him almost unknowingly. The bright ochre colour of the silk he put on, became one with the lustre of his body and he was mistaken for a person surrounded by flames of fire.

15. The zeal and joy of the Kirtan party on seeing the Master

As soon as the Master came out of Mani Babu's temple and reached the public road, the Kirtan party saw his divinely bright beauty, charming dance and repeated deep ecstasy and with their zeal worked up to a pitch, began singing:

"Who takes the name of Hari on the bank of
Ganga, the river divine?
It seems Nitai, the bestower of the divine love, has come.
Who takes the name of Hari, And sings victory to Radha?
It seems Nitai, the bestower of the divine love, has come.
Our Nitai, the giver of love, has come.
How can our hearts be soothed without him? Here comes our Nitai, the bestower of love."

16. All were attracted towards him

When they were singing the last line, they pointed their fingers at the Master and danced with great delight repeating it over and over again, "Here is our bestower of love." That zeal of theirs attracted the attention of

all who came to the festival and they began to pour in there. Those who came and saw the Master were at once charmed, and joined the Kirtan in great enthusiasm or, amazed at the rise of indescribable divine emotion in their hearts, remained rooted to the ground for some time and then followed the Master silently looking on him with unwinking eyes. The zeal of the people gradually seized all the people around and a few other Kirtan parties came and joined the one mentioned before. Thus a vast congregation of people surrounded the Master in ecstasy and proceeded with slow steps towards the cottage of Pandit Raghava.

17. A plateful of Prasada

The women devotees had a few platefuls of sweets offered to Sri Gauranga and Nityananda under the Pipal tree on the Ganga and were bringing them for the Master. A little before they arrived at the house of Pandit Raghava, an ugly, ill-formed Vaishnava in the garb of a religious mendicant came—nobody knew whence—snatched a plateful of Prasada from the hands of a woman devotee and, as if swelling with love and spiritual emotions, put a little of it into the mouth of the Master with his own hand. The Master had then been standing still under the influence of the ecstatic mood. As soon as the man touched him, the whole of his body winced and this disturbed his ecstasy. He spat out the food and washed his mouth. It did not take anybody long to know that that Vaishnava was a hypocrite. Seeing that all were casting glances of annoyance and ridicule, the fellow slipped off. The Master then took Prasada from one of the devotees, ate a particle of it himself, and gave the rest to them.

18. The Master returned to the boat and bestowed his grace on Navachaitanya

It took a long time, about three hours, to walk a distance of one mile and reach Pandit Raghava’s house. The Master took half an hour to go to the temple and touch the Salagrama and pay his obeisance to the images and take rest. The vast crowd of people that came with him, dispersed in various directions. The devotees brought him to the boat when they saw that the

crowd had thinned. But here also there came to pass a wonderful event. Knowing that the Master had come to the festival, Navachaitanya Mitra of Konnagar became eager to see him and was searching everywhere for him. Now that he saw the Master was in the boat and that the boat was about to start, he came running like one mad. He fell at his feet and wept on account of the intensity of the emotions of his heart, praying, "Please bestow grace on me." The Master saw his eagerness and devotion and touched him in a divine mood. We do not know what extraordinary vision he had as the result of that touch, but his importunate weeping was turned into infinite delight in the twinkling of an eye. He danced unrestrainedly in the boat as if he had lost consciousness of the world. He sang the Master's glory in various hymns and bowed down to him over and over again. When some time had elapsed this way, the Master passed his hand over Navachaitanya's back and soothed him by giving him various instructions. Although Navachaitanya had seen the Master many times before, he could not receive his grace earlier. He was blessed to receive it that day. He then placed his son in charge of his worldly affairs, lived in a cottage in his own village on the Ganga like a Vanaprasthin and spent the rest of his life in spiritual practices and in singing hymns glorifying the name of the Master. The aged Navachaitanya used to have ecstasy during Sankirtan from now on and many loved and respected him on seeing his devotion and blissful figure. He was thus able by the grace of the Master to awaken the love of God in the hearts, of many people during the last part of his life.

19. Arrival at Dakshineswar. The Master had a talk with a devotee who was going to take leave of him

When Navachaitanya bade good-bye, the Master said, that the boat might start. Scarcely had we gone a little distance when it was dusk and we came to the Kali temple at Dakshineswar at about 8-30 p.m. The Master sat in his room, and the devotees bowed to him and took his leave to return to Calcutta. All were getting into the boat when one of them, a young man, remembered that he had forgotten his shoes and ran to the Master's room to bring them. The Master asked him the reason of his coming back and said jokingly, "Fortunately you have remembered it before the starting of the

boat; otherwise the whole of today's joy would have been spoilt on account of this event." The young man smiled at these words, bowed down to him and was ready to leave when the Master asked him, "How did you enjoy the day? A fair of Hari's name assembled there; is that not so?" When the young man assented, the Master mentioned the names of those of his devotees who had trances at the place of festival and eulogized junior Naren, saying, "That black boy has been visiting this place for a short time and already he is having trance. The other day his trance would not come to an end—he was devoid of normal consciousness for more than an hour. He says, 'My mind merges in the formless aspect of God now-a-days.' Junior Naren is a good boy; is that not so? Please go to his house some day and have a talk with him. Will you?" The young man assented to all his words and said, "But, Sir, I like no one as much as I do senior Naren; I, therefore, do not feel inclined to go to junior Naren's house." The Master scolded him for saying so, and said, " You, brat, are so one-sided! It is the mean people that become one-sided. The divine Lord has a flower-basket containing various kinds of flowers—He has got various kinds of devotees. It is a sign of a low mind not to be able to mix with all and enjoy bliss; go you must on one occasion to junior Naren; what do you say? Will you?" Having no alternative left, he bowed his assent and bade good-bye to him. This young man, it was afterwards known, went in a few days to have a conversation with junior Naren according to the Master's advice and felt blessed in having the solution of what he said was a very complicated problem of his life. The boat reached Calcutta that night at about 10 p.m.

20. While he was taking his meal at night, the Master spoke with a woman devotee about the Holy Mother

The women devotees stayed with the Holy Mother that night. Knowing that there would be great pomp at the Kali temple on the Snanayatra day, the anniversary of the installation of the Devi, they decided to return to Calcutta after witnessing that festival. While taking his meal at night, the Master said to one of them in the course of a talk about the Panihati festival, "So great was the crowd; besides, all were observing me on account of my ecstasy. She (the Holy Mother) did well in not accompanying us. Had

people seen her with me, they would have said, 'The hamsi and the hamsa[1] have come.' She is very intelligent." In order to give another example of the extraordinary intelligence of the Holy Mother, he continued to say, "When the Marwari devotee[2] wanted to make a gift of ten thousand rupees to me, I felt as if my head was sawn through; I said to Mother, 'Hast Thou come to tempt me again even as late as now, Mother?' In order to test her mind I had her called to me at that time and said to her, 'Look here, he wants to give that sum. Since I cannot accept it, he wants to transfer it to your name. You may accept it. What do you say?' As soon as she heard this, she said, 'How can I accept it? The money can never be accepted; if I accept it, it will be the same thing as your accepting it. For, if I keep it with me, I cannot but spend it on your service and other necessities; so it comes to the same thing, namely, your acceptance. People love and respect you for your renunciation; the money, therefore, can by no means be accepted.' I heaved a sigh of relief."

21. The Holy Mother's talk with the said devotee

When the Master had taken his meal the women devotees went to the Holy Mother at the Nahavat and told her what the Master had said about her. She said, "I could understand from the very way in which he sent me word in the morning regarding my going to Panihati, that he did not heartily approve of it. He would have otherwise said, 'Yes, certainly she may go.' When he placed on me the responsibility of making the decision on the matter, and said, 'Let her come, if she likes'. I decided it was advisable to give up the idea of going."

22. The Master's mood was disturbed on account of the contact of many people on the Snanayatra day and he was annoyed

The Master had no sleep that night on account of the burning sensation in his body. It happened perhaps because people of various kinds of character had touched his divine person during the festival. For, when impure men of polluted minds touched his person and took the dust of his feet for the purpose of becoming free from diseases or with some other motive, he, it

was observed, very often suffered from that burning sensation. The festival of Snanayatra took place on the day following the Panihati festival. We could not be present at Dakshineswar on that occasion. Many men and women, we were told by the women devotees, came to see the Master that day. One of them, called A.'s mother, pressed him to help settle her property and thereby damped his bliss. Seeing her sitting beside him at the time of his midday meal, he was annoyed and did not speak, nor could he take his food on that occasion as usual. Afterwards, when another woman devotee, an acquaintance of ours, went to pour water into his hand for a wash, he said to her privately, "People come here with a view to having divine love and devotion; she wants the settlement of her property to be made here! Look at that! The woman has brought mangoes and sweets with a selfish motive in her mind; I could not put even a bit of them into my mouth. Today is the day of Snanayatra. Ah, how much of ecstasy I used to have on this day in other years! The inebriation produced by that ecstasy used to continue for two or three days; I could have nothing at all today. High moods could not come on account of the atmosphere here, and the coming in contact with people of various states of mind." As A.'s mother stayed that night at Dakshineswar, the Master's annoyance did not abate even at night. He said to a woman devotee at the time of taking his night meal, "Too much crowding of women here is not good. Trailokya, the son of Mathur Babu, is here; how will he take it? It is one thing if one or two women come here now and then and stay here a day or so; but it is quite a different thing if a crowd is here. I cannot put up with such a rush of women." Thinking that they were the cause of the Master's annoyance, the women devotees became much dejected on that occasion and returned to Calcutta as soon as it was morning. There was great pomp on the occasion of Snanayatra in the Kali temple on account of worship, Yatra, etc., but the devotees could not feel any joy that day for the above reason. The reader will understand to a certain extent how keenly mindful the Master was of each daily affair and how he controlled and guided the devotees for their good, in spite of the fact that he constantly lived in high planes of consciousness.

Footnote

1. The two words were spoken in English.

1. The round stone-symbol of the Supreme.—Tr.

1. The syllable “hamsa” in the word Paramahamsa means a swan and “parama” means supreme. So the literal meaning of Paramahamsa is ‘Swan Supreme’; it is applied to the monks of the Sankara order as they reject the world and worldly enjoyments as being unreal, and accept Brahman as the Real, even as the swan rejects water and accepts milk from a mixture of the two. And Sri Ramakrishna was a monk of the same order. The Master expressed it rather serio-comically.—Tr,

2. His name was Lakshminarayan.

CHAPTER XI
THE MASTER MOVED TO CALCUTTA

1. His visit to Panihati increased the pain in the throat. The behaviour of the childlike Master

The pain in the throat of the Master increased after his taking part in the Panihati festival. There had been showers of rain from time to time that day. The doctors expostulated with the devotees that the disease had increased because he had spent a long time with his body and feet exposed to the rains. They said that it would be a serious matter if such irregularity happened again. Consequently, the devotees were determined to be careful thereafter. The boyish Master put the whole blame for the escapade of that day on the shoulders of Ramchandra Datta and a few other elderly devotees and said, "Could I have gone to Panihati if they had forbidden me a little more emphatically?" Although he was not a professional doctor, Ram Babu had studied in the Campbell Medical School and taken a diploma in medicine. As he was a lover of the Vaishnava faith, he had rather encouraged the Master to go to Panihati. He was, therefore, regarded as deserving the greater part of the blame on that account. One day a friend of ours came to Dakshineswar at that time and found the Master sitting quietly on his small bedstead with an unguent on his throat. He said, "I saw in the Master's face the exact picture of that gloomy expression which a boy bears, when he is prevented by way of punishment from doing something and is kept confined in one place. I saluted him and asked what the matter was. He showed me the plaster on his throat and said, 'Just see; the pain has increased and the doctor has forbidden me to speak much.' 'Ah sir,' said I, 'you, I am told, went to Panihati the other day; this is perhaps why the pain has increased.' He said like a boy with a wounded feeling of love, 'Yes, just see, there was water above, water below, rain in the sky and mud on the

roads and Ram took me there and made me dance the whole day before we returned! He has passed an examination and is a doctor; would I have gone there if he had forbidden strongly?' I said, 'Yes, sir, Ram is quite wrong. Anyway, what's done is done; please be careful for a few days and it will be cured.' He was pleased to be told so and said, 'Can one, however, do without speaking at all? Just see, what a great distance you have come from; and I should not speak a word with you! Is it possible?' I said, 'I am full of joy even to see you; you need not speak to me. I shall not feel worried; when you are cured we shall hear many things from you again.' But he did not lend an ear to these words of mine. He forgot the doctor's prohibition, his own suffering and all other things and began talking with me as before."

2. In spite of the sore in his throat and the prohibition of the doctor, the Master now taught as before whoever came to him

The month of Ashar passed. For more than a month he had been undergoing treatment and the pain did not show any sign of abatement. Though he felt it less at other times, the pain increased during the full moon and new moon days and the eleventh days of both the fortnights of the lunar month. It was absolutely impossible for him at that time to swallow any kind of solid, food or vegetable. The Master, therefore, took on those days milk with a little rice or coarse flour of wheat boiled in milk only. Doctors examined him and diagnosed that he had contracted the clergyman's throat; "that is, his organ of speech had been too much exercised in giving religious instruction to people day and night, and his throat was about to develop a sore. It is recorded in medical books that the clergy generally contract the disease. Doctors prescribed medicine, diet, etc., after diagnosing the disease. Although the Master completely followed most of the prescription, it was violated in respect of two points. Unable to control himself on account of his deep love of God and infinite compassion for the people parched by the heat of worldly misery, he could not avoid entering into ecstasy, nor could he cease talking to them. As soon as there arose a talk about God, he, now as before, lost the consciousness of his body and entered info ecstasy; and when people, blinded by the darkness of ignorance and overwhelmed with grief and sorrow, came to him in search of the right

path, eagerly hankering after peace, he would lose himself in compassion for them and would instruct and bless them.

3. Too much labour in giving religious instruction to too many people and sleeplessness due to the Mahabhava were the causes of the disease

Many men who thirsted for religion came to the Master now. Besides the earlier devotees, new persons numbering five or six were daily seen to knock at his door, thirsting for spirituality. It had become a daily occurrence ever since Kesav had come to Dakshineswar in the year A.D. 1875. Therefore, for the past eleven years, the Master was often led away by his zeal for teaching the people who came athirst, and was not able to keep regular hours for daily bath, meals and rest. Besides he had very little sleep owing to the impulsion of the Mahabhava. At the time, when we were staying with him at Dakshineswar, we saw on very many occasions that he got up shortly after he went to bed at 11 p.m. and strolled in an ecstatic mood; he now opened the western door, now the northern, and went out; again, though sometimes lying quietly on his bed, he was fully awake. He left his bed three or four times during the night and yet he rose daily as soon as it was 4 a.m., waited for the light of the dawn, remembering, thinking on, and singing the glories of the divine Lord and would then wake us. Is it therefore surprising that his body should have got worn out on account of his sleeplessness at night and his excessive labour in giving religious instruction to many people during the day?

4. That he sometime felt physical exhaustion was revealed by the Master's loving quarrels with the divine Mother during his Bhavasamadhi

Although the Master did not tell any one that his body was getting too tired and exhausted, we had an inkling of it in his loving quarrels with the Universal Mother but could not completely understand it. One of us went to Dakshineswar one day shortly before he fell ill and saw that, seated on his small bedstead in an ecstatic mood, he was addressing someone and saying, "Thou bringest all worthless people here. One seer of milk adulterated with five seers of water! My eyes are red and swollen and my bones reduced to

powder with pushing wet fuel into the fire and by constant blowing through my mouth. I cannot do so much. If it is Thy pleasure, do it Thyself. Bring good people here—those who will attain spiritual awakening with a word or two only," On another occasion he said to the devotees who were with him, "I was saying to Mother today, 'Give a little power to these few—Vijay, Girish, Kedar, Ram and "Master" (M., the author of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna),* so that the new people may come here after their angularities have been some what rounded by them', Regarding the rendering of assistance in educating the people, he said to a woman devotee at one time, "Pour water yourself and let me prepare mud." When he saw at Dakshineswar, that the crowd of people thirsting for religion were on the increase, the Master in ecstasy said to the divine Mother just a few days after he first felt the pain in his throat, "Shouldst Thou bring so many people? Thou hast produced a veritable crowd; I don't find time to bathe and take my meal. It is only a drum, and with holes in it (meaning his own body), how long can it last if it is played on day and night?"

5. It is impossible to ascertain how many people thirsting after religion came to Dakshineswar

By the end of the year A.D, 1884 the general talk about the Master's extraordinary doctrine, love, ecstasy and ambrosial words spread so much amongst the people of Calcutta, that they were daily pouring into Dakshineswar to have the privilege of seeing him; and having come once, most of them repeated their visits over and over again. But it is difficult to give an estimate of how many people came to him before the Master had the disease of the throat in the month of July 1885. For, there was never an opportunity for all of them to come together at one place on the same day. And this was good in a way. The inner circle of the devotees of the Master were already feeling a great joy over the swelling of the number of his devotees as they thought that their object of worship was becoming the object of worship of the whole country and that the most beloved of them was being loved by all. This joy of theirs should have been converted into fear and dejection; for, had they not heard the Master repeat time and again,

“When many people will regard (me) as God and love and respect this (me), it (the body) will immediately disappear”?

6. The Master’s words about the time of his passing away

The Master gave us from time to time many hints about the time of his passing away. But, blinded by his love, we did not then pay heed to his words though we heard them uttered somewhat explicitly; nor could we comprehend their import though we understood them literally. All then had but one idea in their minds, viz., how all their friends and relatives could enjoy through the Master’s grace the peace which they themselves were enjoying. Therefore, the fear that he might pass away never crossed their minds. The Master had said to the Holy Mother four or five years before he had the throat disease: “When I shall take food out of anybody’s and everybody’s hand, pass nights in Calcutta, and give a portion of my food to anyone else first and then take the rest myself, know that the time of my passing away is fast approaching.” The course of events was actually turning out to be as predicted, even some time before he contracted the disease in his throat. Invited to the houses of people in various places in Calcutta, the Master was now taking all kinds of food, except boiled rice, out of the hand of anybody and everybody. He accidentally spent nights also at Balaram Babu’s house now and then. As Narendra was ill with dyspepsia and did not come to the Master at Dakshineswar for many days, thinking that there could be no arrangement about his diet there, one day the Master had him brought in the morning, fed him early with a part of the rice and soup cooked for him, and took the rest himself. The Holy Mother objected to this and expressed a desire that she should cook for the Master again, when he said, “My mind did not shrink from giving a portion of the food first to Naren. So there will be no harm in that. You need not cook again.” The Holy Mother said later, “Although the Master said so, I felt uneasy on remembering his words spoken long ago.”

7. The Master’s service of Jivas as Siva

Although his body became exhausted on account of excessive strain in teaching people, the zeal of his mind in this respect was never seen to wane. As soon as a fit person arrived, he could know his fitness in his heart of hearts and, losing himself in the infusion of a divine power, would either instruct him or touch him and thus open for him the path to spiritual progress. It would happen like this. The newcomer's spiritual mood would evoke a response from the Master's mind throwing into the background all other moods of his for some time. He would then see with his divine vision how far that person had gone towards perfection and why he could go no farther; next he would remove all obstacles on that person's path and make him ascend to higher planes of consciousness. He thus always served the Jivas as Siva till the last moment of his life and slaked the thirst of the divine desire of men, women and children acquired during many lives and bathed them in the supreme Light of the abode of absolute fearlessness—a gift described by the scriptures as the highest.

8. The Master's power of detecting the hidden ideas and the past impressions in the minds of people

We always saw clearly a power in the Master of detecting the hidden ideas and the past impressions in the minds of people. This can be said to be a good proof of the fact that physical health or illness never touched his mind. But, although he knew completely the mystery of other people's minds, he never divulged it to any one with a view to showing off his extraordinary power. He let any one know only that fragment of his power which would do good to him and point out a higher path to him, or, in the case of a fortunate few, make their faith in the Master himself firm and unshakable. We give here an ordinary example of it for the benefit of the reader.

9. An Example

Hearing that the pain in the Master's throat had increased, one of our acquaintances, a lady, was about to go to see him in the month of August in the year 1885. Another lady of the locality came to know of it and said to

her, “There is nothing else in the house today to send to the Master through you; will you please take with you a potful of milk?” The former refused and said, “There is no lack of good milk at Dakshineswar and there is, I know, an arrangement to provide him with milk; moreover, it will be very inconvenient to carry it. Milk, therefore, need not be taken.”

On reaching Dakshineswar, she saw that it was not possible for the Master to take any diet except milk mixed with rice on account of the pain in his throat, and that the Holy Mother was very anxious as the milk-woman could not, for some reason, give the daily quota of milk. She repented of her not bringing the milk from Calcutta and, inquiring whether milk was sold anywhere in the village came to know that there was not far from the temple a woman of upper India, known as Mrs. Pande, who had a cow and sold milk. She went to her house but was told that all her milk had been sold except about three ounces, which she had boiled and kept with her. When she said that she required it very badly, the milk-woman sold it to her. When she came with the milk, the Master took his rice boiled with it that day. When the Master got up to wash his mouth after he had taken his food, she poured water into his hand. Afterwards, calling her to a secluded place, he said to her with affection, “I feel much pain in my throat; will you please utter the Mantra you know to cure diseases and pass your hand once over the throat?” Hearing these words, the lady was amazed for some time. She then passed her hand over the Master’s throat as desired by him, and then, coming to the Holy Mother, she said, “How could he know that I knew the Mantra? Knowing that it was a Mantra that made one especially succeed in accomplishing acts done with motives, I had learnt it long ago from a woman belonging to the Ghoshpara community. Realizing afterwards that the only aim of life was to call on God without any motive, I abandoned it. I had told everything of my life to the Master except my initiation in the Mantra of the Kartabhaja sect, lest he should hate me for it. How could he know it? “Informed thus, the Holy Mother smiled and said affectionately, ”He can know everything. But he never hates anyone for doing anything sincerely with a good motive. You need not be afraid. I also had been initiated in that Mantra before I came here and told him of it; he said, “There has been no harm done in your being initiated in the Mantra; now offer it at the lotus feet of your chosen Ideal.”

10. The disease increased, the sore in the throat bled. Consultation among the devotees about removing him to Calcutta

Some time passed, but the pain in the Master's throat was seen gradually to increase. The devotees thought again and again but could come to no decision, when an event came to pass suddenly and showed them clearly what they should do. A lady of Baghbazar invited the devotees that day to supper at her house. She had a great desire to bring the Master but, knowing that he was ill, gave up that hope almost completely. Nevertheless, thinking that he might once take a drive somehow and come for some time, she requested a devotee to go to him at Dakshineswar. As that person did not return even when it was past 9 a.m., she made the guests sit for their meal without further delay, when he came and said that the pharynx of the Master bled that day and so he could not come. Those present, Narendra, Ram, Girish, Devendra, Mahendra and others were very anxious and, as the result of their consultation, they came to the conclusion that a house in Calcutta should be hired, and the Master brought there immediately for treatment. Seeing Narendra dejected at the time of taking food, a young man asked him the reason for it, to which he replied, "He, with whom we are so happy, is perhaps going to pass away this time. I have known from reading medical books and questioning doctor friends that this kind of throat disease gradually develops into cancer. Hearing of the bleeding today I suspect the disease to be that; the medicine for this disease has not yet been discovered."

11. The Master came to Calcutta for treatment and stayed at Balaram Babu's house

When, next morning, a few elderly devotees went to Dakshineswar and requested the Master to move to Calcutta for treatment there, he agreed. All knew the Master's love of the Ganga, and so when they found that the river was visible from the roof of a small house at Durgacharan Mukherjee's street in Baghbazar, the devotees hired it and brought him to Calcutta shortly afterwards. But when the Master, who was habituated to living in the open atmosphere of the spacious garden of the Kali temple, entered that small house, he found it impossible for him to live there, and walked

immediately to Balaram Basu's house on Ramakanta Basu street. Balaram received him lovingly and requested him to stay there until a suitable house was available. He agreed to it.

12. Well-known physicians were called, who diagnosed the Master's disease. A house was hired at Shyampukur

The search for a suitable house was going on. Thinking that it was not proper to waste time, the devotees in the meantime called the well-known physicians of Calcutta and secured their opinions about the Master's disease. Gangaprasad, Gopimohan, Dwarikanath, Navagopal and some others were called that day. They examined the Master and diagnosed that he had contracted the incurable disease called Rohini, the inflammatory affection of the throat. While he was leaving, Gangaprasad, questioned privately by a devotee, said, "Rohini is what the Western doctors call cancer; although there is a treatment of the disease prescribed in the books, it has been ascertained to be incurable." Seeing that no hope was held out by the physicians and knowing that too much drugging never agreed with the Master's constitution, the devotees thought it desirable to have him treated according to homoeopathy. In about a week, the parlour of Gokulchandra Bhattacharya, situated on the Shyampukur street, was hired for the Master to live in and he was placed for some time under the treatment of Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar, the famous doctor of Calcutta.

13. A crowd of people gathered in Balaram's house to see the Master

The news of the Master's coming to Calcutta spread from mouth to mouth all over the city. Coming in batches to see the Master, many known and unknown people made the house of Balaram ring with joy as on a festive occasion. Although he remained silent from time to time to conform to the doctor's advice and the plaintive prayers of the devotees, he talked to them on religion with such zeal and energy that it seemed that he had come there for that purpose only,—that he had come for some time to the doors of those who could not go up to Dakshineswar, in order to give them the light of spirituality. Every day during that week from early morning to the time

of his midday meal and from that time, with a rest of about two hours, to the time of taking his night meal and going to bed, he solved the complicated problems of the spiritual lives of many people, attracted many persons to the path of spirituality through discussions on various topics regarding God, and entering into deep realms of ecstasy when listening to music, devotional songs, etc., filled to overflowing the hearts of many individuals thirsting after religion, with a flood of peace and bliss. None of us had the good fortune to be present there at all times on all days. The owner of the house also had many a time to be busy elsewhere making various arrangements about the Master and the devotees. It is therefore almost impossible to have a detailed description of that week. So we shall stop with mentioning one event only, to explain to the reader how the Master passed those few days in the house of Balaram.

14. An event in Balaram's house

We were studying at the college then. So, we had leisure enough to see the Master only once or twice a week. We came to Balaram's house one afternoon and found the hall on the first floor packed to capacity with people, when Girish and Kalipada commenced singing with great zeal:

"O Nitai, hold me!
Today my heart feels an unknown sensation, as it were."

Entering the room with great difficulty, we saw the Master, who was in ecstasy, seated in the western extremity of the room facing the east. We saw his lips adorned with a wonderful smile of bliss and graciousness, his right leg raised and stretched, one person who sat before him, holding that leg of the Master very lovingly and carefully on his breast. That man had his eyes shut and cheeks and breast flooded with tears. All were motionless in the room which was filled with a divine presence, but the song went on:

"Today my heart feels an unknown sensation, as it were.
Hold me, O Nitai!
I am now being carried away by the waves That rose in the river of love.
As Nitai, distributes the name of Hari.

(O Nitai) I have written the bond with my own hand,
To which the ‘eight friends’[1] are witnesses.
How can I pay off my debt to the creditor of love?
For all my accumulated wealth has run out.
And still the debt remains unpaid.
Now I am going to be auctioned on account of that debt of love.”

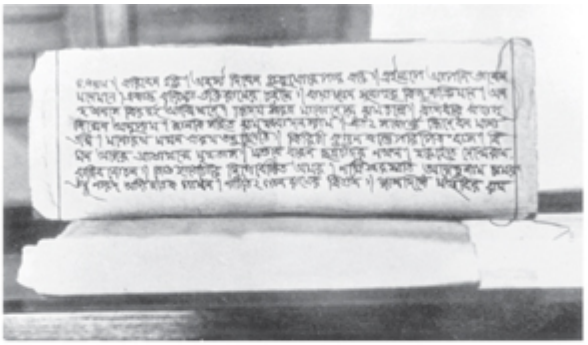
The song came to an end. The Master had partial consciousness some time later and said to the person before him, “Say Sri Krishna Chaitanya,—say Sri Krishna Chaitanya,—say Sri Krishna Chaitanya.” Thus making him utter that name thrice consecutively, the Master regained his normal consciousness shortly afterwards and began talking to others. On inquiry, we came to know that the name of that person was Nityagopal Goswami, that he was a professor of a college at Dacca and that, hearing the news of the Master’s illness, he had come to see him. The Goswami was as great a devotee as he was good-looking.

Shyampukur House

Kasipur Garden House
Sri Ramakrishna’s Room, Kasipur

Sri Sarada Devi's Room, Kasipur

(a)



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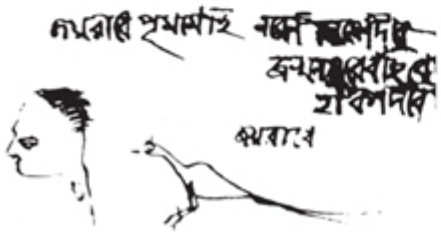

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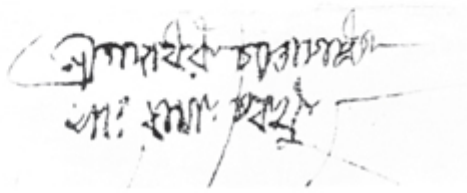
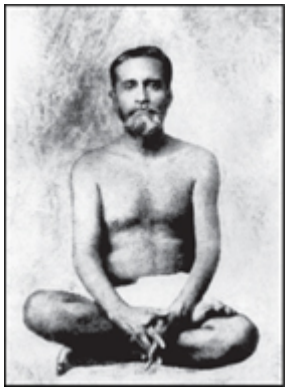


Sri Ramakrishna's handwriting

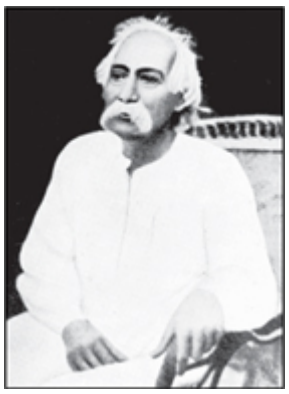
Purna Chandra Ghosh

Kalipada Ghosh



Manomohan Mitra

Vaikunthanath Sanyal



Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar

Binodini

Sri Ramakrishna Temple, Belur Math

Footnote

1. The eight main female friends of Radha, the divine consort of Krishna — Tr.

CHAPTER XII—Section 1
THE MASTER'S STAY AT SHYAMPUKUR

1. A description of the Shyampukur house

The house now hired for the Master extended lengthwise from east to west and was situated on the north side of the Shyampukur street. As soon as one entered the house one saw, on one's left and right, a pavement and a narrow open verandah to sit in. Going a few steps forward, one found on one's right a flight of steps leading to the first floor, and in front the courtyard with two or three small rooms on its eastern side. Going upstairs by the staircase, one saw on one's right a long room extending north and south, meant for visitors to sit in and, on the left, the corridor leading to the rooms extending east and west. This corridor led first of all to the door of the hall called the parlour. This was the room where the Master lived. To its north and south there were two verandahs, the northern one being broader and, to its west, were two small rooms, in one of which some of the devotees slept at night, while the other was given to the Holy Mother to live in at night. Besides, there was a narrow verandah to the west of the room intended for all to sit in; the steps leading to the roof were situated to the east of the corridor to the Master's room and there was a covered terrace about four cubits long and equally broad near the door leading to the roof. The Holy Mother spent the whole day on that terrace and cooked there the necessary diet for the Master. The Master came from Balaram's to this house some time in the second half of Bhadra, the beginning of the month of September, A.D. 1885, and spent there a little more than three months, and moved to the garden house at Kasipur a day or two before the month of Agrahayan came to an end.

2. The Master was placed under the treatment of Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar

In accordance with their previous decision, the devotees called in Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar for the treatment of the Master, a few days after he had come to the Shyampukur house. During the lifetime of Mathur Babu, the doctor had come a few times to Dakshineswar for the treatment of Mathur's family and was not altogether unknown to the Master. But that was long ago; it was, therefore, possible for the famous doctor to have forgotten it and so the devotees called him without telling him the name of the patient whom he was going to visit. But he recognized the Master as soon as he saw him and, examining him and diagnosing the disease with great care, prescribed medicine and diet. Afterwards he spent a little time in religious conversation with him and in talks about the Kali temple at Dakshineswar, before he bade good-bye to him that day. On that occasion the doctor, so far as we remember, asked the devotees to inform him every morning about the Master's physical condition. He accepted his usual fee at the time of his leaving when the devotees offered it to him. But coming on the morrow to visit the Master, he came to know in the course of conversation that the devotees had brought him to Calcutta and were meeting all expenses; he was pleased to see their devotion to their Guru and declined to accept his fee anymore. He said, "I'll treat him without taking any fee and help you in your good action according to my capacity."

3. The consultation about his diet and nursing at night

The devotees could not be free from anxiety in spite of having the assistance of a highly experienced physician. They were convinced in a few days that persons should be appointed to serve the Master day and night whenever necessary, and to prepare his diet carefully. Knowing that neither of those two wants could be removed merely by spending money, the devotees decided to bring the Holy Mother from Dakshineswar to remove the second want and take the help of the boy-devotees to remove the first. But great obstacles lay ahead. For, they were at a loss to understand how the Holy Mother could live there alone, as there was no inner apartment for the ladies in the house. Again, the guardians of the boy-devotees would be highly displeased if they were to come there daily and pass nights without sleep.

4. An example of the great bashfulness of the Holy Mother

Many of the devotees were in great doubt about the Holy Mother's coming there; they were rather justified in their doubt, for did they not know of her exceptional shyness and modesty? Although she was staying in the Nahavat in the north of the garden at Dakshineswar and had engaged herself daily in the service of the Master, no one else, except two or three boy-devotees whom the Master himself introduced to her, ever saw her holy feet or heard her voice during that long period. Although she lived the whole day in that small room and prepared varieties of food twice daily for the Master and the devotees, no one could know that anyone was engaged in doing those duties there. She left her bed every day a little after three in the morning, long before anyone else rose from sleep, and having performed the personal duties of the morning including ablutions in the Ganga; she entered that room and never came out during the whole day. Calmly and silently she finished all her work with wonderful quickness and engaged herself in worship, Japa and meditation. On one occasion during a dark night, while she was going down the steps of the Ghat under the Vakul tree in front of the Nahavat, she almost trod on a crocodile which was lying on a step but at the sound of her footsteps jumped into the water. She never again went to the Ghat without taking a light with her.

5. The proposal of bringing the Holy Mother to Shyampukur

Not one of the devotees could imagine how the Holy Mother, who had been living in that small Nahavat room for so long a time, remaining unseen by anyone could give up all bashfulness, live the whole day in the midst of menfolk in that house. Finding no alternative, they were compelled to talk to the Master on that matter. The Master reminded them of her nature as described above and said, "Will she be able to stay here? However, ask her and see whether, knowing all the circumstances, she likes to come here; if she does, let her come." A messenger was sent to the Holy Mother at Dakshineswar.

6. The Holy Mother's power of acting according to time, place and person1. II. 20.

No one, the Master said, could attain peace or reach his desired goal, if he could not adjust himself to changed circumstances, to the changes of time, place and person; or who failed to act up to the principle, as the Master himself put it: "As the man so the treatment, as the time so the movement, as the place so the action." Although she always kept herself surrounded by the impregnable screen of bashfulness and modesty, the supremely revered Holy Mother had that instruction from the Master and learnt to regulate her life accordingly. The reader will be able to understand clearly, from the description of her first visit[1] to Dakshineswar and from the event mentioned below, how easily and naturally she could, whenever necessity arose, free herself from all habits and past impressions and behave correctly without the least fear or hesitancy.

7. The route from Kamarpukur to Dakshineswar

In those days the Holy Mother had many a time to come on foot for want of money and cheap conveyance, from Jayramvati and Kamarpukur to Dakshineswar. The wayfarers who undertook journeys that way had to proceed to Jahanabad (Arambag) and by crossing the ten-mile-long field of Telo-Bhelo come to Tarakeswar and thence, traversing similarly the field of Kaikola reach Vaidyavati, where they crossed the Ganga. At that time there were ambuscades of dacoits in those two vast fields. It is said even now, that many wayfarers lose their lives at their hands in the morning, at midday, and at dusk. Even today one meets with a very terrible image of Kali having a mouth with large projecting teeth, in the middle of the field about two miles from the two small villages of Telo and Bhelo, situated almost side by side. She is known amongst the local people as the "Kali of the dacoits" of Telo-Bhelo. The dacoits, it is said, worshipped Her and proceeded to kill human beings and commit other cruel deeds! The travellers did not venture in those days to cross the two fields except in groups, thus protecting themselves from the hands of the dacoits.

8. The events that took place when the Holy Mother came on foot to Tarakeswar

Once the Holy Mother was coming on foot from Kamarpukur to Dakshineswar with the daughter and the younger son of Rameswar, the Master's eldest brother, and some other men and women. They reached Arambag and, thinking that there was yet sufficient time to cross the field of Telo-Bhelo before dusk, her companions expressed their unwillingness to stay and spend the night there. Although very tired on account of the journey, she did not tell anybody of it and proceeded with them. But scarcely had they walked four miles before she felt herself unable to keep pace with her companions and was lagging behind. They waited a little for her, asked her to walk faster when she came up to them, and moved on again. When they came to the middle of the field, they found that she again lagged far behind the others. They waited there once more for her and said when she came up, "The field cannot be crossed even within a quarter of the night at this pace and all will have to fall into the hands of dacoits." Feeling that she had become the cause of inconvenience and apprehension to so many people, the Holy Mother forbade them to wait for her on the way saying, "Go direct all of you to the next stage at Tarakeswar and rest there; I'll try to meet you as soon as possible." Seeing that it was sundown and relying on those words of hers, her companions walked away faster and were soon out of sight.

9. In the dreary tract of Telo-Bhelo

The Holy Mother then began to walk as quickly as she could. But, on account of extreme physical exhaustion, her pace slackened and hardly had she reached the middle of the dreary tract when darkness fell on earth. Extremely anxious, she was thinking of what she should do, when she saw a tall, jet-black man with a staff on his shoulder coming forward with a rapid step towards her. It appeared that another person, seemingly a companion of his, was coming a little behind him. Seeing that fleeing or crying was in vain, the Holy Mother stood still and was awaiting their coming with an apprehensive heart.

10. The Bagdi footpad and his wife

The man came up to her in a few moments and asked her in a harsh tone, “Who are you standing here at such a time?” With a view to pleasing him, the Holy Mother called him father and surrendered herself to him saying, “Father, my companions have left me behind and it seems I have lost my way too. Will you kindly accompany me to the place where they are? Your son-in-law lives at Rani Rasmani’s Kali temple at Dakshineswar. I am on my way there. He will be very pleased if you will kindly take me up to that place.” Scarcely had those words been spoken when the other person came up, who, the Holy Mother saw, was not a man, but a woman, the wife of the man. She became highly reassured to see that woman and, catching hold of her hand and addressing her as mother, said, “Mother, I am your daughter Sarada, left behind by my companions; I was in great danger. You and father have fortunately happened to come! I don’t know what I would otherwise have done.”

11. Tenderly looked after by the Bagdi and his wife, she stayed at Telo-Bhelo for the night

The hearts of the Bagdi[1] robber and his wife melted on account of the absolute reliance, the sweet words and the unhesitating, simple-hearted behaviour of the Holy Mother. They forgot the social barrier and the caste they belonged to, and actually looking upon her as their daughter solaced and comforted her. Afterwards, considering her physical fatigue, they took her to a small shop in the neighbouring village of Telo-Bhelo and arranged about her stay there for the night instead of allowing her to proceed on her way. The woman spread her own cloth etc., and prepared a bed for the Holy Mother and the man brought puffed rice and sweetened parched rice and gave them to her to eat. Thus with the care and love of parents they asked her to sleep, themselves guarding her for the whole night. They woke her in the morning and reached Tarakeswar with her in about an hour after sunrise and, taking shelter in a shop, asked her to rest. Then the woman addressed her husband and said, “My daughter had nothing to eat last night. Go and

offer worship to Father Tarakeswar Siva, and bring fish and vegetables from the market; she must be fed well today."

12. The Holy Mother reached Tarakeswar and bade goodbye to the footpad and his wife

When the man went to do all those things, the companions of the Holy Mother came there in search of her and felt joy to find that she had reached the place safely. The Holy Mother then introduced to them her father and mother who had given her shelter at night saying, "I cannot say what I would have done last night if they had not come and saved me." Afterwards, finishing worship and cooking and taking food, they rested a little at that place. When they were all ready to start for Vaidyavati, the Holy Mother expressed her infinite gratefulness to the man and the woman and begged for their permission to take leave of them. The Holy Mother says, "We became so much attached to one another in that one night that I was highly moved and shed incessant tears at the time of taking leave of them. At last I requested them to come to see me at Dakshineswar at their convenience and only when they promised to do so could I come away from them with great difficulty. When we left, they came with us a great distance and the woman wept bitterly, plucked some peas from the neighbouring field, and tied them at the end of my cloth, saying plaintively, 'Sarada, my child, please take these with the parched rice you will eat at night.' They kept the promise they made to me. They came to Dakshineswar a few times with some sweets. He (the Master) also heard everything from me and pleased them by receiving them lovingly and behaving towards them like a son-in-law on those occasions. Although he is simple-hearted and has a good character now, it seems to me that my 'dacoit father' must have committed dacoity several times before."

13. How the Holy Mother lived in the Shyampukur house

As soon as she heard that the Master's disease might increase if he was not provided with diet prepared in strict accordance with the injunctions of the doctor, the Holy Mother came to the Shyampukur house without the

least hesitation and gladly took charge of preparing the diet without at all minding her own inconvenience in staying there. One is surprised to think how she underwent all kinds of physical inconvenience and did her duty staying in a house of one apartment only, for three months among unknown men. Although there was only one place for all to take bath in etc., no one knew when she finished all these things in the morning and went up to the terrace near the steps leading to the roof of the second floor before 3 a.m. She spent the whole day there, prepared diet etc., for the Master at proper time and then sent word downstairs through Swami Adbhutananda or the old Swami Advaitananda. At that time people were asked to move away and she brought the diet downstairs and fed the Master, or we ourselves brought it down, according to convenience. At midday she took her food and rested there. At 11 p.m., when all were asleep, she came down from that place and slept till two in the morning in the room on the first floor allotted to her. Fortifying her heart with the hope of freeing the Master from the disease, she spent day after day in that way. She stayed there so silently and unobservedly that even many of those who visited the house every day could not know that she lived there and took upon herself the hardest and most important work in the service of the Master.

14. The boy-devotees devoted themselves to the service of the Master

When the problem of preparing the diet was thus solved, the devotees applied their minds to the removal of the other want, namely, that of rendering personal service to the Master at night. Narendra himself took charge of it and began staying there at night and encouraging by his own example Gopal (junior), Kali, Sasi and a few other smart young men, attracted them to that work. All of them were firmly determined to live the life of the highest ideal, namely, to live for the realization of God, and inspired by the blazing renunciation of the Master and his holy words and company, and out of their love and regard for him, they resolved to dedicate themselves to his service. Their guardians did not object to their coming to the Shyampukur house and serving the Master till they understood their ultimate purpose. But, as the Master’s illness increased, they altogether stopped going to college and studying and even going to their own houses

to take food. The guardians then became suspicious, and their suspicion yielded place to alarm and they started adopting various means, proper and improper, to dissuade the young men from their devoted service. The boy-devotees, it is superfluous to say, could not have remained firm and unmoved but for Narendranath's example, inspiration and encouragement. Although only four or five persons dedicated their lives and commenced the vow of service at Shyampukur house, the number of those who undertook the vow multiplied almost four times by the time of its completion in the Kasipur garden.

Footnote

1. II. 20.

1. A rather low caste people but generally noted for their physical strength and valour. Formerly, they made very good soldiers. Later, when the British stopped recruitment in Bengal, many of them turned dacoits.—Tr.

CHAPTER XII—SECTION 2
THE MASTER'S STAY AT SHYAMPUKUR

1. The householder devotees took part in the service of the Master. They experienced now and then extraordinary manifestation of spirituality in the Master

It cannot be said that the devotees were free from anxiety after the arrangement had been made for medicine, diet and the twenty-four hour nursing, in the way mentioned above. For, they had the opinions of the famous physicians of Calcutta and clearly understood that, although the Master's throat-disease was not altogether incurable, it was undoubtedly very difficult to cure and it would take him a long time to be free from' it. It was, therefore, the object of their thought now, how the expenses could be met for continuing the service till he finally recovered. This was natural. For, of Balaram, Surendra, Ramchandra, Girishchandra, Mahendranath and others, who brought the Master to Calcutta and took charge of his treatment no one was rich. No one of them by himself had the means of taking the full responsibility for meeting the Master's expenses, together with those of his attendants, after defraying his own family expenses. Urged by the current of the heavenly hope, light, bliss and peace that flowed in their hearts from the Master's presence, they took up that work without any consideration whatever for the future. But it was quite unreasonable to expect that the said holy current would have only a flood-tide all along, and would know no ebb, when the thought of the future would disturb their peace and bliss. And as a matter of fact the current did not flow uniformly. But it is wonderful that as soon as such moments came, they experienced marvellous spiritual manifestations in the Master which made that anxiety vanish altogether, and their hearts were again filled with new zeal and strength. An experience of unrestrained bliss carried them to a plane far beyond the reach of the

intellect and they saw, in a divine light, that he, whom they accepted as the supreme guide on life's dreary path was not only a super-human being, but also the support of the spiritual world, the supreme goal of all living beings —the very God as man, Narayana himself—and that his birth, austerities, and other ordinary acts, even the suffering due to physical illness, were all for the good of humanity. Otherwise how could there be bodily illness in the Supreme Person, all of whose resolves came true and who was beyond the miseries due to birth and death, disease and dotage? They were convinced that he was feigning illness and staying there in order that those who had not the leisure and opportunity to go up to Dakshineswar to see him might come and get the light of the spirit kindled in their hearts, that the disciples might get the privilege of serving him and thereby have the ideal of their lives fulfilled. The Master had come to the conclusion that the persons with the materialistic outlook resulting from Western education might be inspired to take the path of renunciation, whereupon they would lead their lives in the higher light of metaphysics based on the direct experience of the Divinity as illustrated in his life, and realize the utter futility of the life of enjoyment based on the knowledge of natural sciences, on the strength of which they heretofore fondly considered themselves all-knowing and all-safe and made enjoyment the only goal of life. Why then, the disciples thought, should there be any apprehension about the scarcity of funds? He who had given them the privilege of serving him will also give them the power to see it through.

2. Sacrifice by the householder devotees

Let the reader not think that the above words are but an outburst of emotionalism on our part. We have to record these words, only because we actually saw the devotees day in and day out feeling and discussing these things by virtue of the Master's company. We have seen it with our own eyes many a time that, greatly perturbed lest there should be defects in the service of the Master for want of money, they assembled for consultation and returned as many times fully reassured under the impulse of the aforesaid spiritual moods of their minds. One of them said, "The Master will make his own arrangements; and heaven is not going to fall if he does

not; well, what anxiety is there as long as there is one brick upon another there (showing his own house)? I'll mortgage my house and defray the expenses of his service." Another said, "I'll be able to manage the service just as I do at the time of the marriage or illness of my sons and daughters; there is no cause for apprehension as long as there are a few ornaments on the person of my wife." A third again, instead of giving expression to such a feeling, curtailed the expenditure of his household and met unstintedly the expenses of the Master's service. It was under the influence of such moods alone that Surendra personally bore the entire house-rent and Balaram, Ram, Mahendra and Girish together, supplied whatever else was necessary for the Master and his attendants at that time.

3. The disease served the purpose of knitting the devotees together into an Order

The divine bliss that the devotees thus felt in their hearts had its support in the Master and helped very much now in drawing the devotees together and binding them with the cord of love. Although the Order of the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna is said to have started at Dakshineswar, it took form at Shyampukur and the Kasipur garden and grew so fast that many of the devotees were of the opinion that one of the purposes served by the Master's disease was to bring about that development.

4. The devotees' three conceptions about the Master —the incarnation of the age, the Guru and the superman or godman

As time passed on, we find, that the loose talks and imaginations of the devotees about the purpose of the Master's disease and the time of his recovery, took definite shape and divided them into several well-defined groups. The discussions on these points were strongly reinforced by the account of extraordinary events of the Master's early life and brought the devotees to wonderful conclusions. One party thought and expressed openly to all that the physical disease of the Master, an incarnation of God, was simply a feigning and no reality. He had assumed it knowingly in order to accomplish some particular purpose and when that purpose was fulfilled he

would again show himself as before. Girish, with his very great power of imagination, was the leader of that party. Another party was of the opinion that the Mother of the universe, in complete compliance with whose infinite will the Master was accustomed to live and do all kinds of acts, kept him ill for some time, in order to fulfil a particular hidden desire of Her own, which would bring about the good of humanity. It could not be said whether even the Master himself was able to unravel that mystery. As soon as that purpose of Hers should be fulfilled, he would come round. Still another party expressed the view that birth, death, old age, disease, etc., were natural to the body; all these would occur as long as the body lasted that was the explanation of the Master's bodily disease. So, what was the necessity for so much talk and speculation on it and of bringing in a supernatural, hidden cause? They were not ready to accept any conclusion about the Master without analysing it by means of reasoning and inference, and gaining the immediate knowledge of it. They would serve him at the risk of their lives to bring him round and do their best to cast their lives in the moulds of the high ideals of human life he had held before them and would engage themselves in religious exercises for that purpose. It is superfluous to say that Narendranath, as the representative of the young disciples of the Master, expressed the last-mentioned view.

5. The devotees' love for one another

Although the Master's disciples, having different temperaments, thus held different opinions about him, giving rise to different attitudes towards him on one point they were in perfect agreement—they had the fullest faith in the fact that they would come to the supreme good if they could live their lives according to his highly liberal teachings and could attain his grace by engaging themselves in his service with all their heart. That was why there was amongst them no lack of love for one another, though one party believed him to be an incarnation of God, another the Guru or superman and a third a god-man.

6. Examples of the especial spiritual manifestation of the Master as experienced by the devotees

We are now going to mention a few events that we have witnessed ourselves and that are corroborative of the various kinds of spiritual manifestations of the Master to the disciples. Those events were seen also by persons who could not be classed as disciples but who simply came to see him at that time.

7. Dr. Sarkar's attraction and behaviour towards the Master

While Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar was in charge of the treatment of the Master, he, we have said before, put his very heart into curing him. Coming to him consecutively for a few days to see how he was in the morning, at midday and in the evening, the doctor would prescribe medicines etc., and having finished his duties as a physician, spend some time in religious conversation with him on those days. And as he repeated his visits, he was being slowly attracted by the liberal spiritual ideas of the Master and, whenever he had leisure, spent two or three hours in his company. One day, when the Master was about to express his gratefulness to the doctor for spending such a great portion of his valuable time there, the doctor hurriedly stopped him and said in his blunt way, "Well, do you think I spend so much time for your sake only? I have also a personal interest in it. I derive great joy in talking with you. Although I met you before, I did not find time to mix with and know you so intimately, busy as I was with many things. I like you so much, you know, because of your love of truth. You cannot deviate a hair's breadth in your speech and actions from what you know as true; I find elsewhere that they say one thing and do another. I cannot at all put up with that. Don't think I am flattering you. I am not a fellow of that sort. I am a graceless son of my father, as they say; I would speak out plainly even to him, if he should do anything wrong. That is why I have gained notoriety for a sharp tongue."

The Master smiled and said, "Yes, I have heard it, but so far I have got no proof of it, though you have been coming here so long."

8. Whatever the doctor did was prompted by his love of truth

The doctor replied smiling, “That is a piece of luck for both of us. Otherwise, had anything appeared to be wrong, you would have found that Mahendra Sarkar was not a soft person to keep mum. However, don’t think we have no love for truth. I have run hither and thither all my life only to establish what I knew to be true; that is why I have taken to Homoeopathy; that is why ‘The Association for the Cultivation of Science’ has been founded; so also with all other works of mine.”

Some of us, as far as we remember, hinted at that time that, although the doctor had love for truth, he had love for the discovery of only relative truths (Apara Vidya), not leading direct to the realization of Brahman, but the Master had love all his life for supreme Knowledge (Para Vidya) leading to the immediate knowledge of Brahman.

9. The attainment of Para vidya with the help of Apara Vidya

A little excited, the doctor said, “That is the very bee in your bonnet. What are Para and Apara with regard to knowledge? What is higher or lower in connection with the revelation of truth? Again, even if you make an imaginary distinction, it must be admitted that one will have to attain Para Vidya through the Apara. We can comprehend God, the primeval cause of the universe, more clearly through the truths we know directly from the study of the natural sciences; I don’t take into consideration those fellows, the atheistic scientists. I cannot even understand what they say; they are blind though they have their eyes intact. But, if anybody says that he has understood the whole of the endless and the beginningless God, he is a liar and a cheat; a lunatic asylum is his fit residence.”

10. To set a limit to the knowledge of the lord is a sign of mean understanding

The Master smiled and said with a look of pleasure at the doctor, “Right you are; those who ascribe a limit to God are low-minded; I cannot bear their words.”

11. The intellect gives up the search as impossible but the heart hankers after more

Saying so, the Master asked one of us to sing the song of Ramprasad, the foremost of devotees, "Who knows how Kali is? The six philosophies cannot see Her."[1] While he was listening to the song he explained at intervals its import to the doctor in a low voice. When the singer sang, "My heart rests satisfied but not the intellect", the Master stopped him saying, "Oh! It is all topsyturvy there; it should be, 'My intellect rests satisfied but not my heart.' In trying to know God, the intellect easily understands that it is not for it to comprehend the endless and the beginningless God; but the heart is reluctant to feel it; it continues in its attempt to realize Him."

The doctor was charmed to hear it and said, "That's it. That fellow, the intellect, is extremely mean; meeting with a slight difficulty it asserts, 'It cannot be.' But the heart does not approve of it; and that is how all the discoveries have been made and many more will be."

12. The pulse of a boy-devotee in Bhavasamadhi was examined

Seeing that one or two young men were in a trance and lost normal consciousness while they were listening to the song, the doctor came to them and examined their pulse, saying to the Master, "It seems they have no consciousness of external objects like those in a fainting fit." Observing them to regain their previous normal consciousness when the Master passed his hand over their breasts and uttered the name of God into their ears in a low tone, he said to the Master once more, "It seems to be all your play." He smiled and said, "It is not my play, but His will. Their minds have not yet become distracted by wife, son, money, name, fame, etc., and that is the reason why they become merged in the thought of God as they listen to the glory of His name."

13. The "heat" (pride) generated by learning

The previous topic was raised again and the doctor was told that although he himself accepted God and did not ascribe a limit to Him, some scientists

had done away with God; and yet others, while accepting His existence, proclaimed at the top of their voice that He was what they said and could not do what they did not credit Him with the power of doing. The doctor said, “Yes, that is mostly true; but is it knowledge? It is the ‘heat’ generated by learning; it is an indigestion of knowledge. They think that they have solved the whole mystery of the universe because they have been able to know a trifling few things of His creation. Those who not only have studied much but also got much experience are free from that defect. As for myself, I can never entertain such an idea.”

“You are right,” said the Master, “with the acquisition of knowledge there comes egoism: ‘I am a scholar, what I have understood is the only truth; others’ opinions are wrong.’ Man labours under many bondages. The pride of learning is one of them. You are so learned but fortunately you have escaped that pride. That is due to His grace.”

14. The humility of the doctor

“What I have known and understood”, said the doctor, a little warmed up, “seems to be very little, which may well be called nothing, giving no occasion for being proud of it. So many things are there for one to learn that I think, or rather actually see, that every man knows many things which I don’t know. I, therefore, don’t feel humiliated to learn anything from anybody. It appears to me that I may have many things to learn even from them (pointing to us). I am ready to take the dust of the feet of all out of this consideration.”

15. “There is substance in him”

The Master heard it and said (showing us), “I also say to them, ‘O friend, as long as I live so long do I learn’.” Pointing to the doctor then, the Master continued, “Do you see, how free from pride he is? He has certainly substance in him and hence such an attitude.”

The doctor then bade good-bye.

16. The Master's endeavour to lead the doctor along the path of spirituality

As the doctor's faith in and love for him increased, the Master took greater care to lead him on spiritually. Besides, knowing that cultured people like talking with the cultured, the Master sent now and then choice persons like Mahendranath, Girishchandra and Narendranath from among his disciples to have talks with the learned doctor. When he had become acquainted with Girish, the doctor witnessed the *Buddha-charita* staged on one occasion and extolled the play to the skies, and also saw some other plays of his. Similarly, he was charmed by a talk with Narendra, and invited him to lunch one day. Again, when he came to know of Narendra's proficiency in the art of music, he requested him to sing some devotional songs for him some day. A few days afterwards, when one afternoon the doctor came to see the Master, Narendra sang such songs for him for two or three hours and kept his promise. The doctor was so pleased with the singing on the occasion that, before bidding good-bye, he blessed Narendra, embraced him and kissed him, saying to the Master, "I am very happy to see a boy like him come to realize God; he is a gem; he will improve whatever he sets his hand to." Thereupon the Master looked at Narendra with evident pleasure and said, "Gauranga, it is said, came down to Nadia at the loud calls of Advaita; this time everything indeed is for him alone." Whenever thenceforward the doctor came to see the Master and Narendra happened to be present there, he would invariably listen to a few devotional songs sung by him.

17. An example of the doctor's anxiety and behaviour when medicine did not produce the desired effect

It was autumn, the time for the worship of Sri Durga in Bengal. At that time the illness of the Master varied from day to day, increasing on some days and decreasing on others. The medicine was not producing the desired result. One day the doctor came and noticing that the disease was aggravated, ventured a remark, "There must have been some irregularity in diet; well, will you please tell me what you ate today?"

He had had his usual rice-gruel, soup and milk in the morning, and milk and liquid food like barley-water in the evening. He told him so. The doctor said, “No, I can’t take it; there must have been some departure from the prescription. Well, tell me please what vegetables were used for the soup.” The Master replied, “There were potatoes, green plantains, eggfruits and also a piece or two of cauliflower.”

“Ah!” exclaimed the doctor with a start, “you have taken cauliflower! Here, you see, is grave irregularity. Cauliflower is very hot and difficult to digest. How many pieces have you eaten?”

“I did not eat a single piece,” was the mild protest of the Master, “but then, I saw, they were in the soup.”

The doctor replied, “It is immaterial whether you have actually eaten them or not; but there was certainly the juice of cauliflower in the soup. Your digestion has, therefore, been impaired and the disease has increased today.”

The Master said, “How is that? I have not taken cauliflower nor have I had disorder of the bowels; it is difficult to accept that the disease has worsened because of a little juice of it in the soup.”

18. An example of how much harm was done by a slight irregularity or violation of the rule

The doctor continued, “None of you have any idea as to how much harm can be done by some such slight alteration. Let me tell you an event of my life; you will understand the matter when you hear it. My power of digestion has always been bad; I have suffered from dyspepsia from time to time. Therefore, I am very careful about my food and strictly observe dietic rules. I take nothing brought from the market; I have Ghee and oil made at home. Still, at one time I caught a bad cold and contracted bronchitis of a stubborn nature, which refused to be cured. It then crossed my mind that there was certainly something wrong regarding my food. I inquired but could not find out any defect in it. Afterwards, one day, it suddenly came to my notice that the servant was feeding with a quantity of kidney-bean the cow whose milk I took. On inquiry I came to know that a few maunds of that kidney-bean had been had from a certain place. As no one liked to eat it

lest one should catch cold, it was given to the cow to eat for some days. The two events, namely, my catching cold and feeding the cow with kidney-beans coincided perfectly. I then stopped feeding the cow with that and true to my guess, the cold subsided. It took me a long time on that occasion to be completely cured and I had to spend about four or five thousand rupees on change of climate etc."

19. The increase in the doctor's reverence of the Master and his love for the devotees

The Master smiled to hear it and said, "Oh dear! It is I see, like the case of the man who passed by a tamarind tree and caught cold!" All laughed. Though that inference of the doctor seemed a little too far-fetched, nobody raised any question about it, as they saw his firm faith in it. His prohibition was accepted and cauliflower was at once discarded from the ingredients of the Master's soup. The Master's love for him and his simple sincere behaviour and spiritual nature attracted the doctor towards the Master and a sort of reverence was slowly filling his heart. His words and actions on one occasion clearly bear it out. He was now regarding not only the Master but also his devotees with a loving eye and became convinced that they had not made of the Master a false idol. But it is not easy to say how he looked upon their profound faith in and great devotion to the Master. It seems that it appeared to him to be a little excessive. Yet he could clearly understand that they did not adopt their attitude for show or for any selfish motive. He, therefore, seemed to have regarded it as something eluding his comprehension. Although he mixed intimately with the devotees and his keen intellect was engaged in solving the problem, it remained still an enigma to him. For, in spite of his being a believer in God, he was so deeply influenced by Western education that he was unable to understand how one could worship or pay reverence to a man as Guru or an incarnation of God even when one actually saw in him an extraordinary manifestation of divine Power. He was against this attitude only because he could not understand it. The cause of this general antagonism of the educated modern to it is not far to seek. Generations of disciples of those who are being worshipped in the world as incarnations of God, exaggerated certain things connected with

their lives in such a way that they have made it impossible for others to believe these. The disciples, no doubt, did so in their zeal to propagate the glory of their Masters. But this false zeal has evoked antagonism. One day the doctor said plainly before the Master in this connection, "I can understand love, worship, etc., or whatever else you say regarding God, but a world of confusion arises as soon as that infinite God is said to have come down as man. It is difficult to understand that He incarnated Himself as the son of Yosoda,[1] the son of Mary,[2] the son of Sachi[3] and so on. That host of 'sons' has ruined the country." The Master smiled at these words and said to us, "What does he say? It is, however, true that low-minded fanatics many a time wanted to make them appear so great and act in such a way that these reactions are naturally produced in people's minds."

20. The doctor's opinion about incarnations of God and his objections to the theory. His surprise at the Master's Bhavasamadhi at the time of the annual worship of Durga

Girishchandra and Narendranath had from time to time many controversies with the doctor on the aforesaid opinion of his about God's incarnations, as a result of which he became a little wary of giving expression to such an opinion without due consideration. For, it was proved that many reasonable arguments might be given against it. But what could not be accomplished by reason was done by the extraordinary love and sweetness of the Master and by the wonderful spiritual manifestations in him, which the doctor saw with his own eyes. And that opinion of his gradually changed to a great extent. The sudden appearance in the Master of the extraordinary manifestation of Power that we witnessed[1] during the annual worship of Durga at the juncture of the eighth and the ninth days of the bright fortnight of the lunar month of Aswin that year, gave the doctor also an opportunity to witness and examine it. He was present there that day with another doctor friend of his and examined the heart-beats etc., of the Master with instruments. His doctor friend did not refrain even from poking his finger into the open eyes of the Master to see if they would wink. As a result of their examination, they were amazed and had to admit that science could not throw any light so far on the state of Samadhi in which one

appeared to be dead externally to all intents and purposes, as was the case with the Master and that the Western psychologist, in calling this state unconsciousness and in expressing his contempt for it, had but revealed his ignorance and had proved his stubbornness by not accepting the existence of any world other than this, and that there existed many things in God's creation, the mystery of which had not at all-been explained by Western science and philosophy so far. Nor was there any likelihood of their ever being solved in future. As it has been mentioned elsewhere, it is needless to repeat here how factually true were the mental experiences of the Master on that occasion, when he externally appeared like one dead.

21. The disease aggravated

The month of Aswin passed and that of Kartik and the day of the worship of Kali were approaching; but no improvement in the physical condition of the Master was seen. The good effect the treatment produced at first was fast disappearing and there was apprehension lest the disease should assume a serious turn. But the bliss and the cheerfulness of the Master's mind appeared to the devotees to increase rather than decrease. Although Dr. Sarkar visited him frequently now as before and changed medicines repeatedly, he did not get the expected result and considered the change of the season to be the cause; and that condition, he thought, would pass as soon as the cold of winter increased a little.

22. The description of the wonderful Bhavasamadhi of the Master on the occasion of the annual worship of Kali

The devotees witnessed an extraordinary spiritual manifestation at the time of the annual worship of Kali also, as at the worship of Durga. At one time Devendranath had a desire to bring an image and worship Kali in it. Thinking that it would be a matter of great joy if he could carry that resolve into practice in the presence of the Master and his devotees, he made a proposal to perform that worship at the Shyampukur house. But the devotees thought that the Master's body would get more exhausted on account of the zeal, excitement and noise at the time of the worship and

tried to dissuade him. These words of the devotees appeared to be reasonable to Devendra, who consequently gave up that idea. But on the day before the worship, the Master said all of a sudden to a few devotees, “Collect all the ingredients for a brief worship; Mother Kali must be worshipped tomorrow.” Happy to hear him say so, they began consulting others. But as they had no other instruction from the Master regarding the preparation for the worship except the aforesaid words, all kinds of suggestions were offered. Unable to come to a decision regarding such important matters as whether the worship was to be performed with sixteen ingredients or five, whether cooked rice was to be offered or not, who was to officiate as priest, etc., they decided at last to keep ready sandal-paste, flowers, incense, light and fruits, roots and sweets only, and wait for further instruction from the Master, which they might afterwards follow. But the Master gave them no more instruction even when the whole of that day and a half of the following day on which the worship was to take place had passed.

23. The preparation for the worship

It was sunset and it was 7 p.m. Seeing that the Master did not suggest to them anything more regarding the worship and was sitting quiet on his bed, they washed clean a portion of the floor to the east of his bed, brought the collected articles and placed them there. While he was at Dakshineswar the Master sometimes worshipped himself with sandalpaste, flowers and other ingredients. Some of the devotees had witnessed it. At last they came to the conclusion that on that occasion also he would worship the universal Consciousness and Its Power in the symbol of his mind and body or perform the scriptural worship of the self as one with the Mother of the universe. It was therefore no wonder that they should place the ingredients of the worship near the Master’s bed in the aforesaid manner. The Master did not in any way dissuade them from doing it.

24. The Master sat silent

All the articles were gradually brought. Incense was burnt and lamps were lighted and the room became illumined and filled with fragrance. Seeing that the Master was still sitting quietly the devotees sat beside him; some among them awaited his command and looked at him with a concentrated mind and some others meditated on the divine Mother of the universe. The room was thus completely silent; and although there were thirty or more persons in it, the room seemed to be vacant altogether. Some time passed that way; but the Master even then sat quietly without himself beginning to perform the worship or asking any one of us to do it.

25. Girishchandra came to a decision and offered flowers at the lotus feet of the Master who entered into Bhavasamadhi

The elderly devotees, Mahendranath, Ramchandra, Devendranath, Girishchandra and others, as well as the young devotees, were present. Of them all, Girishchandra, the Master sometimes said, had a super-abundance of faith.[1] Many of them were now surprised to see the Master take that attitude regarding the worship. But Girish had a different sentiment surging in his heart. It struck him that the Master had no need to worship Kali for his own sake. If it was suggested that he had a desire to perform the worship under the impulse of selfless devotion, why was he sitting thus quietly without doing so? It did not seem so. Might it not be then that these preparations were meant for the devotees so that they might be blessed by worshipping the Mother of the universe in the living image of the Master's person? It was certainly that. Thinking so, he was beside himself with joy and, suddenly taking the flowers and sandal-paste that were lying there before all, offered handfuls of them at the lotus feet of the Master uttering, "Victory to Mother". At this all the hairs of the Master's body stood on end and he entered into profound ecstasy. His face radiating effulgence, his lips adorned with a divine smile and both his hands assuming the attitude of granting boons and freedom from fear—all indicated the manifestation of the divine Mother in him. These events occurred in such a short time that many of the devotees who were near Girish, thought that he saw the Master in ecstasy first and then offered flowers etc., at his holy feet over and over again, and to those who were a little farther away it seemed that the

luminous image of the Devi suddenly appeared before them in the body of the Master.

26. The devotees worshipped the Master in that state of Bhavasamadhi

It is superfluous to say, that there was no limit to the joy of the devotees. Each of them managed to take flowers and sandal-paste etc., from the tray, and uttering a Mantra according to his liking, worshipped the lotus feet of the Master and filled the room with the repeated sounds of 'Jai' (Victory). Some time passed this way when the ecstasy of the Master came to an end and he was in a state of partial consciousness. The fruits, roots, sweets, etc., collected for the worship were then brought before him and were given him to eat. He, on his part, took a little of all those things and blessed the devotees so that their knowledge and devotion might increase. Afterwards they took his Prasada and sang the glory of the Devi and the greatness of Her name till a late hour in the night.

The devotees experienced a joy they had never felt before, at this especial worship of the divine Mother that year, the memory of which remained fresh in their minds ever after. And whenever sorrows and miseries came and they became dejected, that serene face of the Master, brightened with a divine smile and his hands promising boons and freedom from fear, appeared before them and reminded them that they were all under the protection of the Divine.

27. The devotees' direct experience of especial spiritual manifestation of the Master at times other than those religious festivals

It was not only on especial days of religious ceremonies that the devotees experienced the divine power and the divine nature of the Master during his stay at Shyampukur. They had the opportunity of seeing the manifestation of that nature burst forth at any time on any day, which strengthened their faith in him as a god-man. However, events similar to those mentioned above did not take place again before all and sundry. It was given to only a few devotees to witness them. They in their turn, communicated them to

other devotees with similar results. This will be clear to the reader when we mention here a few events as examples.

28. Balaram's love and reverence for the Master resented by his relatives

We mentioned elsewhere certain things about Balaram. Some of his relatives became ill disposed towards him because he and his family had contracted love and reverence for the Master. They had sufficient reason to become so. Firstly, they held religious doctrines that were too narrow and they were too much given to the observance of external rites and ceremonies, according to the training and education prevalent in the Vaishnava families in which they were born. They could not, therefore, comprehend the liberal doctrine of the Master, for he had the firm conviction that all churches and denominations (as means for realizing God) are true, and he was not putting on any kind of external emblem of religion. Nor did they feel the need for any exertion towards comprehension. They, therefore, regarded Balaram's liberal tendencies, acquired through the Master's grace and company, as lack of and deviation from religiousness. Secondly, wealth, respect, noble birth and other kinds of worldly superiority very often develop in man a peculiar kind of pride and egoism. It was a matter of pride and glory to them to have been born in the family of the late Krishnaram Basu of holy memory. It is superfluous to say that they felt wounded at heart when they heard that Balaram forgot that great reputation of the family and went at any time, like an ordinary man, to the Master at Dakshineswar to learn religion and that, worst of all, he did not hesitate to take his wife, daughters and other ladies there. They were, therefore, determined to dissuade him now from it.

29. They tried to prevent Balaram from coming to the Master

Pride is generally seen to have recourse to dishonest means when honesty proves unavailing. Some of the relatives of Balaram were in that state of mind. When they found that neither the high praise of the single-minded devotion and great love for the chosen Ideal of Bhagavan Das of Kalna, and

other Vaishnava “fathers”, nor the repeated reminders of the greatness of the family could dissuade him from going to the Master, they assumed an attitude of hatred towards the Master and did not even hesitate to calumniate him sometimes. It must of course be said that they received their reports about the Master at secondhand and regarded him as devoid of single-minded devotion to his chosen Ideal, heterodox in matters of food and drink and customs and usages, and antagonistic to the use of marks on the forehead and other emblems of the Vaishnava religion. Seeing that this did not produce any effect, they at last brought various distorted accounts of the Master and Balaram to the ears of his cousins Nimai Charan Basu and Harivallabh Basu.

30. The early life of Balaram

The noble quality of kindness and the spirit of renunciation and dispassion which were prevalent in Balaram convinced him that estates etc., could not be managed properly without occasional recourse to cruel means; so he left his estate and other property in the charge of Nimai Babu. Although what he got from him as the income of his property was not always sufficient, he somehow managed his worldly affairs with it. He was also not physically fit to look after those things. At one period after reaching youth, he became so ill of dyspepsia that he had to give up taking rice for twelve years at a stretch and live on barley water and milk. He spent a great part of that period at Puri for regaining his health. He then passed his time in Japa, worship, holy company and paying daily obeisance to the image of the divine Lord and so on. He had thus opportunities for being well acquainted with whatever good or bad there was in the Vaishnava community. Shortly after, he came to Calcutta on some business and met the Master. We have already given an indication of how his life changed day by day by virtue of his living in the Master’s holy company.

31. Balaram came to Calcutta and luckily met the Master

Balaram had to come to Calcutta for a few weeks at the time of the marriage of his eldest daughter. His peace of mind during his full eleven

years' life at Puri was not otherwise disturbed. His cousin Harivallabh Basu purchased the house at 57, Ramkanta Basu Street, shortly after that event. His father and cousins secretly conferred together and asked him to live in that house, lest he should renounce the world on account of his intimate relation with the holy men at Puri. Deprived of the sacred company of holy men and the daily visits to the temple of Sri Jagannath, he felt dejected and came to live in Calcutta with a heavy heart. He seems to have intended at first to go back to Puri somehow or other after a short stay; but he completely gave up that resolve when he met the Master and arranged to live permanently in Calcutta. Now he would feel much worried from time to time, lest Harivallabh Basu should ask him to vacate the house or Nimai Basu should call him to Kothar to look after the estate and other property and thus deprive him of the holy company of the Master.

32. Balaram's cousin Harivallabh came to Calcutta

Anxious thoughts sometimes foretell future events. This held good of Balaram now. His apprehension came true. At the secret instigation of his relatives, both his cousins sent him letters hinting that they were displeased with him. And the news that Harivallabh Basu would soon come to Calcutta and stay with him for a few days with a view to settling some important matters in consultation with him also reached him duly. Although the soul of Balaram was not distressed on that account since he felt that he had done nothing wrong, he was dejected lest the force of circumstances should take him away from the Master. After a great deal of anxious thought he at last came to the conclusion that he would not leave the Master behind during the Master's illness and go elsewhere even though his cousins decided against him. Harivallabh Basu came to Calcutta in the meantime. Balaram made every arrangement to ensure that his cousin had no trouble or inconvenience during his stay with him. He then remained firm in his own resolve, and without fear or anxiety continued visiting the Master openly every day.

33. The Master desired to see Harivallabh out of compassion for Balaram

The face is the best mirror of the mind. The Master understood that there was a struggle going on in Balaram's mind as soon as he saw his face when he came to him on the day Harivallabh Basu came to Calcutta. The Master looked upon Balaram as very much his own; sympathizing with him in his trouble, the Master called him aside and putting a number of questions to him, came to know everything about the situation and said at last, "What sort of man is he? Can you bring him here some day?" Balaram replied, "As a man he is very good, sir; learned, intelligent, magnanimous and charitable; he gives away a lot and is a devoted soul too; his only defect is the one that the rich generally suffer from, namely, he is a little too credulous. He has guessed something from others' words in this case. He is displeased with me, only because I come here. So I don't know if he would come here at my request." The Master said, "You need not then ask him; please call Girish here."

Girish came and gladly agreed to bring Harivallabh. He said, "Harivallabh and I were class-mates for some time when we just stepped into our youth. So, I usually go to see him as soon as I know he has come to Calcutta. Therefore it is not at all difficult for me to do it. I'll go to see him this very day."

34. Girish brought Harivallabh to the Master. His ideas were changed completely by the Master's behaviour

Girish came next day with Harivallabh Basu at about 5 p.m. and introduced him to the Master saying, "He is Harivallabh Basu, my boyhood friend. He is the Government pleader at Cuttuck. He has come to see you." The Master welcomed him lovingly, seated him close to him and said, "I heard of you from many people and had a desire to see you; I had again a fear lest you should have a calculating intellect. (To Girish) But I now see it is not so. (Pointing at Harivallabh) He has the simplicity of a boy. (To Girish) Do you notice his eyes? One can never have such eyes if one's heart is not full of devotion. (Touching Harivallabh suddenly) O yes! you seem to be very much my own; with you I don't feel like keeping my distance." Harivallabh bowed down to the Master, took the dust of his feet and said, "That is your grace."

Girish said, “It is natural that he should have devotion for the Lord, for, he is born in a family of noted devotees. People think so highly of the devotion of the late Krishnaram Basu that he is considered worthy of being remembered every morning when they take the name of pious souls. The fame of his piety has brought glory to this part of the country. Who would have devotion if not they who are born in his family?”

There arose thus a discussion on devotion to the divine Lord. The Master was speaking variously to those present about the fact that the supreme achievement of human life was to have faith in God, devotion to Him and absolute dependence on Him, when he entered into ecstasy. When a little later he regained partial consciousness, he asked one of us to sing a devotional song and explaining in a low voice its import to Harivallabh, was in deep ecstasy once more. When the song came to an end, it was seen that two or three young devotees also were in a trance. And, completely charmed with the Master’s words that touched everyone’s heart, Harivallabh shed tears of love. He took leave of the Master on that occasion some time after it was dusk.

35. Why the Master touched persons in the course of conversation; its result

While we were at Dakshineswar, we very often saw the Master cleverly touch a new-comer in the course of conversation when the latter began arguing against his doctrine, or any one else who came in a mood of antagonism against him on account of some reason or other, and saw that they accepted his words thenceforward. Of course, he behaved that way only with those he felt pleased to see. One day he told us the reason of it of his own accord. He said, “Under the influence of egoism and the feeling that they are in no way inferior to anyone, people do not easily like to accept others’ words. As soon as they touch the Being who resides within this (his body), that tendency loses its force, that egoism cannot raise its head again on account of His divine power, even as a snake, touched with a particular herb at the time of raising its hood, bends its head low. That is why I cleverly touch their persons during talks with them.”

The above-mentioned words of the Master came to our mind on seeing Harivallabh Basu take leave of him with reverence in his heart and in an attitude completely contrary to that he had before. The thought, it is needless to say, that Balaram was doing something wrong in visiting the Master was never again seen to cross the minds of his cousins.

36. Increase in the number of devotees; the Master pointed cut to them their paths of Sadhana. The postures fit for the meditation on God with and without forms

As the physical condition of the Master grew worse during his stay at Shyampukur, the number of people coming to see him and attain his grace increased daily. Householder devotees like Harish Chandra Mustafi and young devotees like Sarada Prasanna Mitra (who became afterwards well known in the Order of the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna as Swami Trigunatita), Manindranath Gupta and many others saw the Master here for the first time. Again, although many like Swami Abhedananda had paid a visit or two to Dakshineswar, it was here that they got the opportunity of coming into intimate contact with him. The Master observed their nature and past impressions and guided them accordingly along the path of Sadhana where either pure devotion or devotion with discrimination between the Real and the unreal predominated. He never missed an opportunity to give them instruction in secluded places and urge them to go forward on those paths. The Master, it is known to us, was one day teaching a young man various kinds of sitting and other bodily postures fit for the meditation on God with forms and on God without forms. Sitting in the posture of Padmasana, placing on the palm of his left hand the back of his right, taking both the hands in that posture to his breast, shutting his eyes, he said, “This is the best posture fit for all kinds of meditation on God with forms.” And remaining seated in that posture of Padmasana, placing his right and left hands on his right and left knee respectively, bringing together the tips of the thumb and the forefinger of each hand keeping all other fingers straight and steadying his eyes between the eyebrows, he said, “This is the most commended posture for the meditation on God without forms.” Scarcely had the Master said those words when he entered into ecstasy and,

bringing the mind forcibly down shortly afterwards to the plane of normal consciousness, said, “No more can be shown; as soon as I sit in that posture, the mind becomes absorbed and merges in ecstasy; the vital airs within the body go upwards and the sore in the throat gets hurt; the doctor, therefore, has especially enjoined that there must not be any ecstasy.” The young man became very sorry and said, “Why did you demonstrate all those things? I did not ask to see them.” He replied, “That is true, but can I do without demonstrating or expounding a little to you?” The young man was surprised to think of his infinite grace and the great inclination of his mind to ecstasy.

37. Many were attracted to the Master to see the sweetness and uniqueness of all his actions

There was such a unique sweetness in all the actions of the Master that many new-comers were simply overwhelmed by it. We mention below an event as an example. We heard of it from Atulchandra Ghosh, the great poet Girishchandra’s younger brother, who had exceptional love for his friends. We shall try to record it in his own language as far as possible:

38. An example: Upendra, a sub-judge

“Upendra[1] was an intimate friend of mine; he was a sub-judge living away from home. After my acquaintance with the Master I wrote to him, ‘When you come next, I shall show you a wonderful object.’ He came during the Christmas holidays and reminded me of that. I said, ‘I thought of introducing you to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa; but he is now ill and is staying at Shyampukur; doctors have forbidden him to talk; you are a new-comer; so, how can I take you there?’ That day passed. Another day, Upendra came to see my brother (Girishchandra) when there arose a talk about the Master. My brother said to him, ‘Why don’t you go with Atul some day and see the Master?’ Upendra said, ‘He has been telling me for the last six months that he would take me there; but when I came here and reminded him of it, he said, it would not be possible now.’ I heard these words and said to my brother, ‘Even we are not always allowed to go in now; how can I take a new-comer?’ My brother said, ‘Anyway take him

once; that done, the Master will show himself to him and love him if he is lucky enough.'

39. Upendra came to Shyampukur. His experience of the Master's loving behaviour with him

"Later, one afternoon I took Upendra there. The Master's room was packed with an audience sitting on two long mats spread on the floor, reaching up to his bed, and various kinds of useless talks were going on—talks on painting (for, the painter Annada Bagchi was there on that day), on melting gold[1] in the goldsmith's shop and so on. We sat for a long time, but there was not a single word except words of that nature. I thought, 'I have brought this new-comer here today and it is this very day that all kinds of useless talks are going on! What an idea about the Master would he (Upendra) carry with him?' I felt extremely difficult on thinking so. I was looking at him at intervals with apprehension. But, whenever I looked at him, I saw in his face an evident expression of pleasure as if he was enjoying those talks quite well. I then asked him by a sign to leave, but he signed back to me to wait a little more. I gave him such hints twice or thrice, when he rose and came up to me. I then asked him, 'What were you listening to so long? What is there to listen to in these talks? Do we call you simple without a reason?' We used to call him so because he had a tattooed mark on his forehead. He replied, 'Oh! no; it was nice to listen to. I only heard of universal love before; but never saw it manifested in anyone. I have experienced it today in him (the Master) when I saw him making merry on trifling topics like that with all around. But I must come once again; I have three questions to ask.'

"I took Upendra with me the next morning. There was practically none with the Master then. Only one or two attendants and Sri Mallick, my brother-in-law, were there. I said to Upendra over and over again before we started, 'Ask him personally what you have to ask; you will then get answers to your satisfaction; don't ask these questions through anybody else.' But he was of a bashful nature; he happened to do exactly what I told him not to do; he put the questions through Mallick. The Master gave answers which, I understood from the expression of Upendra's face, were

not to his satisfaction. I then said to him in whispers, ‘It is bound to be so; did I not tell you again and again to ask him personally what you had to ask? Why don’t you put questions personally? Why have you engaged a pleader to hold a brief for you?’

40. God is both with form and without form, just like water and ice

“He took courage and put personally one question to the Master, ‘Sir, has God forms or has He not? And if both, how can two such contradictory natures be in Him at the same time?’ The Master answered immediately, ‘He is both with form and without form—like water and ice.’ Upendra had taken the science course at college; so, that example given by the Master was to his entire satisfaction. He was pleased to get that answer which he understood with the help of his knowledge of science. He asked that one question and refrained from asking two others, bowed down to the Master and took leave of him. When we came out, I asked him, ‘Upendra, you said you had three questions; why did you put only one and come away’? He replied, ‘Don’t you understand? All the three questions of mine have been solved at once by that one answer.’

41. Atul was annoyed at brother Ram’s words

“Brother Ram,[1] perhaps you remember, used to take an early meal at home at that time and come very often to the Master with a small bundle containing his office dress. He spent an hour or two there before he changed his dress and went to office. When the Master was answering Upendra’s question, he came suddenly to that room while he was putting on his office dress and heard those words of the Master. As soon as we came out brother Ram ventured to say, ‘Brother Atul, bring him (Upendra) here; the Master’s answer to his question will be too difficult for him to understand. He will have to read this book[1] of mine in order to understand the Master’s words.’ I was annoyed at those words and did not hesitate to say, ‘Is it not a fact, brother Ram, that you have been coming to the Master for the last seven years, long before we saw him? Ah! And you say he will not understand the truth from what the Master has said but will understand it through the

perusal of your book! What the Master could not make clear, your book will! What a queer idea! But if you want to give Upendra your book to read, you may do so; that is a different matter.' Brother Ram became a little embarrassed and handed over the book to Upendra."

Footnote

1. Who knows, O my mind, how Kali is?

The six philosophies cannot see her.

Kali as the hamsi co-habits with the hamsa in the cluster of lotuses.

The Yogi always meditates on Her in the lotuses from the basic one to the thousand-petalled in the brain.

There are lakhs of proofs that Kali is the Self of one who is contented in the self.

She, the saviour, resides according to Her sweet will in the hearts of all beings as the divine Will.

Do you know how big is the Mother's womb in which is contained the macrocosm, Brahman's universe?

The great Gatherer *(i.e.,* the Destroyer) alone has known the truth about

Kali: who else knows it so?

Prasad sings: people might smile, but I must swim across the sea.

The heart has understood, but the intellect will not; a dwarf (that I am) attempts at catching the moon.

1. Sri Krishna.

2. Jesus Christ.

3. Sri Chaitanya.

1. II. 8.

1. “Four or five annas more than the sixteen annas making a rupee”, as the Master used to put it.

1. Upendra Nath Ghosh. He was related to Bhupendra Nath Basu of Shyambazar.

1. The Master sometimes told us an amusing story of the dexterity of goldsmiths in stealing gold and silver. Atul Babu referred to that story here. The story is this: A man came to a goldsmith's shop with a few friends in order to sell an ornament and saw an old goldsmith who had his whole body decked out with marks of sacred coloured earth or sandal-paste, his head with a tuft of hair and his neck with strings of beads. He was sitting outside his house and taking the name of Hari in a very profound mood. His three or four assistants had put on similar marks and beads and engaged themselves in making various kinds of jewels inside the house. Seeing the Sattvika dress and ornaments of the old goldsmith and his assistants, that man and his friends thought that the goldsmiths were religious people and would not cheat them. They then placed the jewel they had come to sell before the old goldsmith and requested him to ascertain its exact price. The old man seated them lovingly and asked an assistant to prepare a smoke of tobacco for them. He then tested the ornament on the touchstone, told them the price of that quality of gold and, with their permission, handed it over to an assistant inside the house to melt it. The assistant began immediately to melt it and suddenly remembering God, cried out "Kesava, Kesava". On account of the association of divine ideas in his mind, the old man also simultaneously uttered in a loud voice "Gopala, Gopala". An assistant inside the house repeated immediately afterwards "Hari! Hari! Hari!". The one, who brought tobacco, handed over the bowl to the new-comer in the meantime and said aloud when entering the house, "Hara, Hara, Hara". As soon as he said so, the first mentioned assistant threw dexterously some melted gold into the pot filled with water before him and appropriated it to themselves.

The new-comers did not understand that for the goldsmith and his assistants the aforesaid names of the divine Lord had unusual meanings. Instead of saying Kesava, the name of God, they inquired "Kesava", which in Benagli means "Who are they?" In other words, they wanted to know whether the new-comers were intelligent or foolish. As answer to this question, the old man said "Gopala", not in the sense of the boy Krishna, but in the sense of "Go-pala", a herd of cattle, implying thereby that they were as foolish as a herd of cattle. And by the two words Hari and Hara (the names of Vishnu and Siva respectively) were meant "Let me then steal" (hari), and "Do steal" (hara). Pleased with their devotion and steadfastness in religion the new-comers smoked tobacco without suspecting any foul trick. They then had the melted gold weighed, took its price and returned home cheerfully.

Bankim Chandra, the famous novelist of Bengal, took up a sceptical attitude and put to the Master various complicated questions on religion on the day on which the Master met him in the house of Adhar Chandra Sen, his very loving devotee. After giving proper replies to those questions, the Master said to Bankim Chandra, by way of a joke, "You are Bankim (crooked) by name and also by actions." Pleased with the answers which touched him to the heart, Bankim Babu said, "Sir, you must come to our Kanthalpara house some day; there are arrangements for the service of the divine Lord and all of us take the name of Hari." The Master replied in fun, "How do you take the name of Hari? Is it as the goldsmiths took it?" Saying so, the Master narrated the aforesaid story, which evoked a peal of laughter from the audience.

1. Ramchandra Datta.

1. *Tattvaprakasika* by Ramchandra Datta.

CHAPTER XII—SECTION 3
THE MASTER'S STAY AT SHYAMPUKUR

1. The Master saw sores in his body. They were caused by his taking on himself the burden of others' sins. Its result

WHILE he was staying at Shyampukur, one day the Master had a wonderful vision. He saw that his subtle body came out of his gross body as he was strolling hither and thither in the room, and he observed that its back was covered with sores, especially in the region of the throat. He wondered at the cause of such sores, when the divine Mother of the universe explained to him that people had committed various evil deeds and had become pure by touching him; the burden of their sins was thus transferred to him and consequently he had sores in his body. We had heard the Master say sometimes at Dakshineswar that he was not afraid to be born lakhs of times to do good to living beings. It was, therefore, no wonder that he should joyfully speak of it to us without being at all affected by it. We were charmed to remember and discuss his infinite grace. But the devotees, especially the younger ones, took particular care to see that no new-comers should bow down to him and touch his feet till he regained his former health. And some of the devotees, again, thought of their unrestrained early lives and determined that they would not any more touch the holy person of the Master. But some rare persons like Narendra engaged themselves in the inquiry and research into the matter when they got this clue to the truth of the doctrine that one could voluntarily take upon oneself the results of actions done by another—a doctrine which is fundamental to the Christian, Vaishnava and some other faiths.

2. The devotees laid down restrictions with regard to newcomers

Girishchandra observed the attempt at preventing new-comers from visiting the Master and said, “There’s no harm trying, but it is not possible; for, that is the very purpose of the Master’s advent.” Although perfect strangers could be prevented the new-comers known to the devotees, it was afterwards seen, could not be. So, it was settled, that no one unknown to any devotee should be allowed to approach the Master. And those who were known should be told beforehand not to bow down to him and touch his feet. The violation of this rule too was allowed from time to time when some perfect strangers were seen to have very great eagerness.

3. An actress saw the Master with the help of Kalipada

There took place a funny incident with regard to that rule. While the Master was at Dakshineswar, on one occasion he went to witness a certain religious drama staged in the theatre managed by Girishchandra and praised the actress who acted the leading part. The actress had the good fortune to worship the feet of the Master while he was in an ecstatic mood, at the end of the play. Since then, she looked upon him as God Himself and adored him accordingly. She was seeking an opportunity of seeing him again. She became now very eager to see the Master once more when she heard of his serious illness. As she was acquainted with Kalipada Ghosh, she entreated him importunately and placed her entire reliance on him in that respect. Kalipada was a follower of Girish in all matters and did not believe that the Master’s illness would increase if an evil-doer became repentant and touched his holy feet, as Kalipada was convinced that the Master was the Incarnation of the age. He, therefore, had no fear or hesitation in taking that actress to the Master. He took counsel secretly and one day dressing her like an European gentleman, as “young Bengal” used to then, came with her at dusk to the Shyampukur house where the Master was staying. He introduced her to us as a friend of his, took her to the Master and told him who she really was. None of us was in the Master’s room at that time and Kalipada had, therefore, no obstacle to overcome. Knowing the actress had come in that dress to throw dust in our eyes, the Master, fond of merriment, laughed. Pleased with her faith and devotion he praised her courage, strategy and reverence. He gave her a little spiritual instruction that she

might have faith in and reliance on God and bade good-bye to her soon afterwards. She shed tears of joy and repentance, touched adoringly his holy feet with her head and went away with Kalipada. We came to know of this afterwards from the Master and, seeing that he was joking, smiling and expressing joy on account of the trick played on us, we could not be cross with Kalipada.

4. The cause of the increase of sentimentalism amongst the devotees

Although the faith and devotion in the hearts of the devotees increased by leaps and bounds owing to the Master's company and the services they rendered to him, there arose now a possibility of their minds running along a path which was not only full of dangers but led in a direction opposite to that of spirituality. The temporary surgings of emotions now became dearer to them than austere renunciation and difficult self-control. The devotees could not understand that such sentimentalism, sweet as it was, could not impart to them the power of winning victories over lust, anger, and hosts of the other enemies of man, if it did not rise from the depth of renunciation and self-control. There were several causes that produced this sentimentalism. The first of the causes was the ordinary human trait of having recourse to easy paths and objects. While man practises religion, he wants to conduct his life in such a way as will enable him to hold on both to God and to the world, to enjoyment and to renunciation. A few rare fortunate persons only regard them as of contrary natures, like light and darkness and do not fall into such errors. They understand that those two cannot be harmonized without the risk of compromising the ideal of renouncing one's all for God-realization. Those who want to achieve the impossible feat of keeping close to both the shores take out their life's boat just a little away from this shore of the world, resolutely discard all thought of farther journey and lie at anchor there for ever. The Master, therefore, tested variously everybody as soon as he came to him and ascertained whether he "lay thus at a safe anchor" or not. If he knew that he was doing so, he would reveal to him as little of the ideal of renunciation for the sake of God as he could accept. This was the reason why his teachings differed with different persons according to their fitness; he gave different kinds of

instruction to his devotees with families and to young disciples. That was the reason why, while he gave instruction to people in general, he said, that devotion as expounded by Narada and the singing of the name of Hari were alone efficacious in the Kaliyuga. The study of religion and the scriptures became so obsolete amongst the public at that time that it was doubtful whether one in a hundred understood the meaning of the phrase "devotion as expounded by Narada". People did not know that the renunciation of one's all out of love for God also had been taught by Narada. It was therefore no wonder that, prompted by their weak nature, the ignorant devotees of the Master would sometimes fall into the error of clinging to both the lives, the worldly and the spiritual, and of regarding the increase of sentimentalism as the acme of religious experience.

Again, another cause leading the devotees to that error probably was that they did not see the very firm basis on which the extraordinary emotionalism of the Master was established, for his austere self-control and penances had been practised long before they went to him. But the greatest of its causes presented itself when Girishchandra gave his spiritual "power of attorney" to the Master and, fully convinced that the Master was the incarnation of the age, was preaching it at the top of his voice to one and all with great joy and enthusiasm. Although many had had that idea regarding the Master, all of them obeyed his ban on revealing it. For the Master had been warning them for a long time to regard that as the time for his passing away when many people would come to know him as an incarnation of God. But Girishchandra's mind was made of a different stuff.

He could never in his life conceal any thought or action of his, good or bad. He, therefore, could not obey that interdict of the Master. He forgot the fact that his keen intelligence, his life full of various events and his heart surcharged with infinite zeal and faith, enabled him to understand the unlimited influence of the Master's extraordinary power and helped him to surrender himself to him completely. So he invited one and all quite indiscriminately to do what he himself had done. Neglecting, therefore, the necessity of personal effort, devotional exercises, renunciation, austerity, etc., and uttering the cheap shibboleths, "We have given him the power of attorney", "We have surrendered ourselves to him", and so on, people came to regard the realization of God as easy of attainment. Girishchandra's

infinite love for the Master could have prevented his preaching it, had not his intelligence told him that He who had assumed a body to arrest the decline of religion prevalent for a long time and to set the wheel of religion moving anew, and who was undergoing voluntarily the miseries of birth, old age, etc., in order that the Jivas suffering from all the "three miseries"[1] might find a refuge in Him, could not possibly pass away before His desired work was completed. He was, therefore, not to blame if he invited people to take refuge in the Master and to have peace and divine bliss like himself.

5. Ramchandra followed in Girish's footsteps and tried to out do him

The intelligence of many elderly devotees like Ramchandra was then overpowered by the keen intelligence and argumentation of Girishchandra. Ramchandra, we have said before, was born in a Vaishnava family. It was therefore no wonder that he should truly take the Master to be Sri Krishna and Sri Gauranga. But he had observed a certain amount of restraint regarding the matter before Girish preached his ideas about the Master, which served like adding fuel to the fire of his zeal. He did not, however, stop with merely preaching that the Master was an incarnation of God, but indulged in speculation as to the identities of particular devotees of the Master in his previous incarnations as Gauranga and Krishna. And those, it is needless to add, who experienced bodily changes and sometimes lost normal consciousness on account of temporary surges of sentimentalism occupied a high spiritual rank in his judgment.

6. Vijaykrishna Goswami fanned the flame

While the devotees allowed themselves to be carried off by the current of sentimentalism, thanks to their firm conviction that the Master was the incarnation of the age, Vijaykrishna Goswami came from Dacca to see the Master and declared before all without any reserve how, at the time of meditation in his room at Dacca, the Master had appeared there physically before him and how Vijay touched[1] his body and limbs. This acted like a high wind fanning a wild fire. Five or six of the devotees then used to undergo bodily changes and to lose partial consciousness as soon as they

listened to devotional music etc. They gave up the royal road of common sense and reason and discrimination between the real and the unreal and were getting themselves habituated to the morbid attitude that anything might be brought at any time by virtue of the divine power of the Master and were living on the tiptoe of such expectations.

7. Narendra's efforts to check it and increase renunciation, self-control, etc., amongst the devotees. Why the Master did not try to do so

When this unhealthy sentimentalism was being regarded by the devotees as the acme of religious life, it could not escape the notice of the sharp-witted Narendranath, to whom the Master always gave the highest place amongst the devotees, that this kind of mind was as good as useless compared with renunciation, self-control, single-minded devotion, etc., and that there was a possibility of great danger in future if it were given a free rein. Narendra tried to explain it to them and save the situation. The question may arise, why was the Master indifferent even though he saw the possibility of the devotees' going astray? It may be said in reply that he was not so; but knowing that genuine emotion freed of all artificiality was one of the paths leading to the realisation of God, he was seeking a favourable occasion to guide them on that path by observing who among those devotees were actually fit for it. For, we heard him say time and again, "Nothing comes about but at the proper time, however much we may wish for it;" "Success has its own time;" "Everything awaits the right time." Again, who knows that he was not observing Narendra in his crusade against that error of the devotees and was waiting for the result of his efforts? Or, it may be that it was his intention to make Narendranath the instrument in the matter and have the corrective administered through him.

8. Sentimentalism is of little value, as it does not produce a permanent change in life

Thinking that the circle of young devotees, possessed of firm bodies and determined minds could easily understand his words, Narendra adduced reasons and arguments against this growing tide of sentimentalism. He said,

“The sentimentalism that does not produce a permanent change in human life but makes man eager to realize God at one moment, but at the very next has little power to make him desist from seeking lust and gold, has no depth and is, therefore, of little value in life. Though under its influence some might shed tears and experience horripilation and other bodily changes, or even a temporary withdrawal of normal consciousness, it is, I am perfectly convinced, produced by nervous weakness. A man should by all means eat nutritious food and take the help of a physician if he cannot suppress it through the exercise of his will-power.”

9. There is very often artificiality in tears, horripilation and other bodily changes

Narendra added, “There is much of artificiality in those bodily changes and absence of normal consciousness. As our control over ourselves grows firmer, our real genuine sentiments go deeper. It is in the lives of very rare persons that spiritual sentiments become so powerful as to assume the form of tidal waves, overflowing even the firm dam of control, and manifest themselves as bodily changes and temporary cessation of normal consciousness. Foolish men cannot understand this and reverse the process; the depth of spiritual sentiments, they think, is attained as the result of those bodily changes and that loss of normal consciousness. They, therefore, make efforts that those effects might soon happen to them. That will and effort of theirs develop gradually into a habit and weaken their nerves increasingly as days pass on, so that in course of time those changes come on them at the slightest appearance of a sentiment. Consequently, they become insane or afflicted with a chronic malady by indulging freely in them. In trying to practise religion, eighty per cent of people turn cheats and about fifteen per cent mad; the remaining five only attain the immediate knowledge of the infinite Truth and are blessed. Hence beware.”

10. Narendra’s words carried weight when the behaviour of certain devotees was noticed

We could not at first take those words of Narendranath to be true. But we had to do so when shortly afterwards it was revealed, by chance, that one devotee sat in seclusion, singing verses that gave rise to such sentiments, deliberately trying to induce corresponding bodily changes in himself; that another had practised earlier that kind of charming dance which a particular devotee had been seen to perform, at the time of the partial withdrawal of normal consciousness during trance, and that a third person, soon after seeing the beautiful dance of the second person, started dancing similarly in trance. Again, observing that a devotee had trances more frequently than before, Narendra convinced him in private of his folly and requested him to practise the control of sentiments and eat comparatively nutritious food, and as the result of doing so for a fortnight, he acquired health and self-control to a great extent. When many saw these facts demonstrated before their very eyes, they had to believe in Narendra's words and no longer regarded themselves unfortunate, because they did not have bodily changes and cessation of normal consciousness like the other devotees.

11. Narendra ridiculed sentimentalism and made fun of it; "demons" and "women friends"

Narendra did not stop with preaching this with the help of reason and arguments only, but, when he scented the slightest artificiality in anybody's sentimentalism, he ridiculed and made merry over it in the presence of all, and the devotee felt embarrassed and humiliated. Again, he would raise the topic of man's imitating the gestures of woman as was prevalent in the practice of Sadhana of a class of Vaishnavas and the extremely ridiculous form which it sometimes assumed. He thus roused a peal of laughter amongst the devotees and held to ridicule those of us who were inclined to that kind of sentimentalism, saying that they belonged to the class of "women friends" of the Lord. In fact, Narendranath, a lion among men, could not at all put up with the idea that, because a man had come forward to practise religion, he should give up his virility, self-exertion and his indomitable search after truth and should, instead, confine himself to imitating the gestures of women, to the singing of Vaishnava lyrics and to weeping. He, therefore, seriocomically called those devotees "Siva's

demons", who took to the virile form of Sadhana and had devotion tempered by the discrimination between the real and the unreal, nicknaming, those of the opposite nature as "women friends" of the Lord.

12. His efforts to establish true renunciation and love for God in place of sentimentalism

Narendranath could not rest satisfied simply by effecting a breach in the circle of sentimentalism with his reason and sarcasm. He was fully convinced of the fact that mere preaching did not produce its effect till a new mental attitude could be substituted in its place and made great efforts towards that. He gathered together the young devotees during his leisure, sang together with them devotional songs that awakened in their hearts the idea of the transitoriness of the world, renunciation and devotion to God, and thus tried to keep burning in their hearts the flames, of those sterling spiritual qualities. Coming to see the Master, many returned shedding tears because there was roused in them strong detachment and love of God as the result of their listening to the songs, hymns, etc., sung by Narendra in his sweet voice, e.g.,

> "O heart, do you hold this culture so dear to you?
> Ultimately all that will return to dust!"

* * *

> "O Thou, the sea of nectar who art concentrated Bliss and Consciousness, life overflows with joy when we sing Thy name."

* * *

> "I am neither the mind, nor the intellect, ego and the mind-stuff,
> I am neither the ears and the tongue, nor the nose and the eyes.

I am neither ether and earth, nor fire and air,
I am Siva, Bliss and Consciousness absolute,"

13. One's life will be similar to that of the Master if one loves him

Again, he would narrate stories from the life of the Master regarding the Sadhana brought about by the Master's profound love of God, or he sometimes revealed the Master's glory in a way that amazed the disciples. Or, at other times, he would quote passages from *The Imitation of Christ* and say, "The life of anybody who will truly love the Lord will be perfectly moulded in His pattern. Therefore, whether we truly love the Master or not will be best proved by this fact." Moreover he reminded us of the Master's saying, "First tie the non-dual knowledge in the corner of your cloth and then do whatever you like." He then explained to us that all the Master's emotionalism arose with that knowledge as its basis. The devotees had, therefore, to make efforts to attain the said non-dual knowledge first.

14. Narendra's endeavour to make the devotees critical in accepting new truths

Narendra encouraged them very often to examine new truths first and then accept them. Hearing that one's physical ailments could be cured with the help of the concentration of the mind, he, we remember, gathered us together and engaged us in that practice, in a room with its doors closed, to remove the physical disease of the Master. Again, he always tried to see that the devotees kept themselves aloof from irrational observances. The event mentioned below may be cited as an example.

15. Mahim Chakravarti's hankering for name and fame

Mahimacharan Chakravarti's house was situated opposite the place where the southern part of the Mati pond met the Kasipur Road. He was adorned with many good qualities but he was ever eager to pass himself off as greater than he actually was. He did not, it seems, even hesitate to have recourse to falsehood if that would fetch him honour. This anxiety, that

people should regard him as wealthy, learned, intelligent, religious, generous and possessed of all other good qualities, regulated each action of his life and sometimes made him a laughing-stock too. Once Mahimacharan started a free school and called it "The Educational Section of the Institute of the Oriental Aryans" (Prachya-arya-siksha-kanda-parishat). He called his only son by the name of "The holy face of one having the moon on his head" (Mrigankamauli-putatundi); he had a deer which he called Kapinjala after the name of that anchorite. For, did it become a scholar like him to call things or persons by short, simple names? He had a collection of various English and Sanskrit books. When we became acquainted with him, one day we went to his house with Narendranath and asked him, "Have you, Sir, read all these books?" He humbly assented in reply. But Narendra brought out some of those books the next moment and, finding that their leaves had not even been cut, asked the reason for it. He replied, "Do you see, brother, people took the books after I had read them and did not return them. I have bought these books again and replaced them with these; I don't allow anyone to take out books from here any more." But Narendra discovered in a short time that none of these books had its leaves cut. Narendra was, therefore, certain that he kept those books only with a view to passing himself off as a great scholar and adding to the beauty of the house.

16. The tiger-skin of Mahima who posed himself as a man of knowledge

At the time when we became acquainted with him, Mahimacharan introduced himself to us in the course of conversation as a spiritual aspirant on the path of knowledge. He used to visit Dakshineswar many years before the devotees of Calcutta went to the Master, and on certain days of religious festival, placed a tiger-skin under the Panchavati, put on ochre-dyed clothes and Rudraksha beads, took his one-stringed musical instrument and sat for Sadhana with great pomp. He hung the tiger-skin on a wall in a corner of the Master's room when he returned home. This was enough for the Master to understand the man. For, asked one day whose skin it was, the Master said, "It has been kept here by Mahima Chakravarti. Do you know why? People will see it and ask me whom it belongs to; and when I mention his name, they will consider him to be a very big Sadhaka."

17. Mahimacharan's Guru

When there was a talk on initiation, Mahimacharan sometimes said, "The name of my Guru is Agamacharya Damaruvallabha." Again, he said at other times that he had also been initiated, like the Master, by Tota Puri, the itinerant Paramahamsa. "I met him", said he, "at a certain place when I went on a pilgrimage in the western part of the country and got initiated. He has asked the Master to live his life as a devotee and instructed me to live in the world as a Sadhaka on the path of knowledge." It is superfluous to add that the truth of his words was known only to himself and to Him who knows all hearts.

18. The religious Sadhana of Mahimacharan

The only Sadhana one saw him practise was the uttering of the Pranava with his voice in unison with the note of his one-stringed instrument, together with "shouting" a verse or two from books like the *Uttara Gita* at intervals. He said that it was the discipline according to the eternal path of knowledge; no other discipline was necessary if one practised it. This itself would awaken the coiled power and one would see God. The holy image of Sri Annapurna was installed in Mahima Babu's house and it seems, the annual worship of Sri Jagaddhatri used to be performed there. It is inferred from these facts that he was born in a Sakta family. He seemed to have followed the method of the Sakta Sadhana in the latter part of his life. For, while he drove in a small buggy, he was heard at intervals to cry out, "Tara, That Thou art, Thou art That." He had a small estate the income from which was sufficient to satisfy his worldly needs.

19. Mahimacharan at Shyampukur

Mahima Babu came to visit the Master on two or three occasions during the Master's stay at Shyampukur. On those occasions after enquiring about the welfare of the Master, he came and sat down in the room that was intended for all people, and practised Mantra in unison with his onestringed instrument and, while he was doing it, talked at intervals on religious subjects to others. Charmed with his personal beauty enhanced by the ochre

cloth he put on, his gigantic corporeal frame and the glamour of his words, many used to put spiritual questions to him. The Master also sometimes said to him, “You are a scholar; please go and give them (all present) some instructions.” For, it was not unknown to the Master that Mahima had a great desire in his heart to have a few disciples and to spread his own name.

20. A debate between Mahima and Narendra

One day Mahima Babu came to Shyampukur and spoke thus on many things and tried to establish that the method of discipline adopted by him was the easiest and the best, all other methods being low and tortuous. Narendra could not bear it when he saw the young devotees of the Master, listening to this without a protest. He brought forward contrary arguments and proved Mahima’s position to be untenable saying, “What is the proof that one will see God by uttering Mantras as you, in unison with music of the one-stringed instrument?” Mahima Babu replied, “Sound itself is Brahman. God cannot help revealing Himself in response to Mantras uttered in unison with musical notes. Nothing more need be done.” Narendra retorted, “Has God made such an agreement with you in writing? Or will He appear before you with stealthy tread like a snake charmed by Mantras and herbs, when you raise the pitch of your voice and utter mystical syllables like Hum Hum?” It is needless to say that Mahima Babu’s preaching did not prove the more interesting for Narendra’s arguments and he bade good-bye earlier that day.

21. Narendra taught equal regard for all true Sadhakas

Narendranath also kept a watch over the devotees of the Master to see that they paid due respect to the true Sadhakas of all religious communities. “Paying reverence to the Sadhakas of one’s own community only and condemning all others, as people in general do, is”, he said, “as good as showing disrespect to the Master’s doctrine, ‘As many faiths, so many paths’, and therefore, to the Master himself.” We remember an event of this sort which happened during our stay at Shyampukur.

22. Prabhudayal Misra, the Christian missionary

One day a Christian missionary named Prabhudayal Misra came to see the Master. We could not at first know him to be a Christian owing to his ochre cloth. When in the course of conversation we came to know from him what he was, he was asked why he, a Christian, had put on ochre cloth. He replied, "I was born in a Brahmin family; should I give up the customs and practices that have come down to me from my forefathers only because I have the good fortune to put faith in sweet Jesus and accept him as my chosen Ideal? I believe in the Yoga scriptures, and with Jesus as my chosen Ideal, practise Yoga exercises daily. I have, of course, no faith in distinctions recognized by the caste system but I do believe that it is prejudicial to the practice of Yoga to take food out of the hand of anybody and everybody. So, I take Havishyanna[1] cooked by myself every day. Consequently, though a Christian, I have been obtaining the results, one after another, of Yogic practices, such as seeing light etc. The Yogis of India, the lovers of God, have been wearing ochre cloth from time immemorial; what dress other than this can be dearer to me?" Narendranath put question after question and brought out all his dearest and innermost ideas one by one and knowing him to be a Yogi and holy man, paid great respect to him and asked us also to do likewise. So, many of us touched his feet and bowed down to him. We took sweets etc., the Prasada of the Master, together, in one and the same place. He expressed his view about the Master and said that he regarded him as Jesus himself.

23. Further deterioration of the Master's illness; the devotees brought him to the Kasipur garden

Narendranath thus guided the devotees of the Master on the right path when the Master's disease was daily worsening. Dr. Sarkar became anxious on seeing that those medicines that had produced more or less good results before were no longer efficacious. Coming to the conclusion that it was due to the close, polluted atmosphere of Calcutta city, he advised that the Master should be removed to some garden house outside the city. The first half of the month of Agrahayan had then passed. Knowing that the Master would

be unwilling to change house in the next month of Paush, the devotees did their utmost to find out such a house. In a short time they hired for a monthly rent of eighty rupees the garden house of the late Gopal Chandra Ghosh the son-in-law of Rani Katyayani, situated on the eastern side of the main road leading to the Baranagar Bazar, where the northern part of the Mati pond of Kasipur touched that road. Surendra Nath Mitra of Simulia, Calcutta, the exceptionally loving devotee of the Master, promised to pay the whole rent.

When the final settlement regarding the house had been made, an auspicious day was looked up in the almanac, and furniture, utensils, etc., were shifted from Shyampukur and other arrangements made. At last the devotees brought the Master from Shyampukur to the garden house of Kasipur in the afternoon of the penultimate day of the month of Agrahayan. They felt great joy in their minds when they saw the Master joyous over the seclusion and the open air of that place, adorned with trees full of fruits and flowers.

Footnote

1. Namely, due to the soul's association with the body, due to other creatures like tigers, snakes, etc., and due to natural agencies, such as lightning, flood, etc.—Tr.

1. IV.5.

1. Boiled rice with clarified butter, considered sacred food.—Tr.

CHAPTER XIII—SECTION 1
THE MASTER IN THE GARDEN HOUSE OF KASIPUR[1]

1. Kasipur

The Kasipur garden house is situated on the broad road that runs through the north of Calcutta and joins the Baghbazar quarter with Baranagar, three miles from the city. On both sides of that road from the north of Baghbazar bridge to the cross-roads, a little to the south of that garden, are seen the cottages of poor labourers and small shops full of articles necessary for their daily lives. There are a few brickworks interspersed among them — a few jute mills, the iron factory of the Dost Company, the firm of Ralli Brothers Ltd., one or two gardens or dwelling houses and the police station and the Fire Brigade station situated to the south-west of the Kasipur cross-roads. And not far to the west of it stands the famous temple of Sri Sarvamangala Devi, as if to bear witness to the terrible differences in human condition between the poor and the rich. Again, as the Sealdah railway station was improved and extended, many tin-roofed godowns etc., have now been built on the said road and have destroyed the little beauty it had a few years ago. Although this ancient road is thus not pleasing to the eye of a poet or an artist, it has some value in the eye of the historian. For, Nawab Siraj[2], it is said, advanced along this road and occupied the British fort of Govindapur, and a palace of the black-hearted traitor Nawab Mirzaffar once stood on this part of the road a little more than half a mile from Baghbazar. This portion of the road from Baghbazar to the cross-roads of Kasipur is not beautiful; but the part of it extending from there to the Baranagar bazaar cannot be called unattractive. Going a little further north from the said cross-roads, one meets with the southern part of the Mati pond and, opposite to it on the

eastern side of the road, with the beautiful residential home of our well-known friend, the late Mahimacharan Chakravarti. The Railway Company has now purchased the greater part of the garden surrounding this house and extended a branch of the railway to the bank of the Ganga through it, which has robbed the house of all its former beauty. Going a little further north from there, one sees on one's left the northern side of the Mati pond and opposite to it, on the eastern side of the road, the high wall and the iron gate of the Kasipur garden. A few beautiful garden houses on the bank of the Ganga were situated on the road lying to the west of the Mati pond. Of these again, the, best and the most beautiful was Mati Lal Sil's garden, which now, on coming under the occupation of the Calcutta Electric Company, has been shorn of all its previous serene beauty, yielding place to the din and bustle of industry. A broken residential house of the Basaks was situated on the Ganga to the north of this garden. As rows of Tamarisk trees stood on both sides of the path leading from the road to the broken house, a wonderful beauty and sound then always soothed the eyes and ears of visitors. While we were staying with the Master at the garden house of Kasipur, we very often, went to the Sil's garden for a bath in the Ganga, and as the Master liked Gulchi flowers, we plucked them from the big trees growing by the side of the Ghat and presented them to the Master. Very often, again, we went through the path adorned with those beautiful rows of Tamarisk trees and, reaching the Basak's uninhabited garden house, sat down on the bank of the Ganga. A little to the north of this garden lay the spacious bathing Ghat belonging to the late Prahanath Chaudhuri and to the north of it again stood the beautiful temple of Sri Gopala, belonging to Rani Katyayani, wife of the famous Lala Babu. We sometimes went to that place too for taking bath in the Ganga and paying our obeisance to Sri Gopala. The late Gopal Chandra Ghosh, son-in-law of Rani Katyayani, was the owner of the garden house of Kasipur. The devotees hired it from him at the monthly rent of eighty rupees, at first for six months and then executed a bond for another three months. Surendranath Mitra of Simla, Calcutta, a great devotee of the Master, signed the bond and paid the whole rent.

2. Siraj-ud-daula, the last independent Nawab of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.—Tr.

The Kasipur garden was very beautiful, though not big. It had an area of about fourteen bighas.[1] That quadrangular piece of land was a little longer from east to west than from north to south and was surrounded by high walls. A row of three or four rooms almost touching the middle of the northern compound-wall were meant for the kitchen and the stores. Facing those rooms and on the other side of the garden there was a two-storeyed residential house; it had two rooms upstairs and four downstairs. Of the rooms on the ground floor, the one in the middle was a spacious hall. To the north of it there were two small rooms side by side; from the western one of these rooms a flight of wooden steps led to the first floor and the eastern one was allotted to the Holy Mother. The above-mentioned hall extending from east to west and the room to the south of it, which had a verandah to the east, were used by the devotees for sitting and sleeping in. Above the hall on the ground floor there was a square hall of equal dimensions, on the first floor. It was here that the Master lived. To the south of it there was a small portion of the terrace of the ground floor, surrounded by walls, but open above; here the Master sometimes strolled and sat. And to the north of it there were the roof of the room through which the steps led upstairs and a small square room equal in size to and situated above the room fixed for the Holy Mother. Here the Master used to take his bath etc. It was also used at night by one or two attendants.

On the eastern and the western side of the residential part of the house were two flights of stairs leading to the hall on the ground floor, which was surrounded by a brick-built circular garden-path. In the south-west corner of the garden and joined to its western wall there was a small room for the gate-keeper and to the north of it was the iron gate. A semi-circular garden-path broad enough for carriages went north-east and joined the circular road round the residential house. There was a small pool to the west of the residential quarters. Opposite to the western stairs leading to the hall and on the other side of the garden-path there was a flight of steps leading down to the said pool. In the north-east corner of the garden there was a pond four or five times bigger than the said pool, having two or three one-storeyed rooms to the north-west of it. Besides, there was a stable in the north-west corner of the garden, to the west of the above-mentioned pool, and situated side by side there were two dilapidated, brick-built rooms for the gardeners

near the middle of the southern wall of the garden. Everywhere else in the graden were mango, jack, lichee and other fruit-bearing trees. The garden-paths were adorned with flower plants on both sides. Much of the land near the pool and the pond was used for growing greens and vegetables for the kitchen. Again, spread at intervals among trees, there were lawns covered with green grass adding much to the beauty of the garden.

3. The Master came and started training his boy devotees

The Master came to this garden on the 11th of December, A.D. 1885. As the disease gradually worsened during these eight months and as his tall, strong body was reduced to a mere skeleton, his mind, perfect in self-control, increasingly went on disregarding its fury and the pain arising from it. He appeared to all observing eyes to have girded up his loins to complete the work already begun, of teaching and training up the order of his devotees by imparting necessary instructions without a break or pause both individually and collectively to them. Moreover, we were constantly witnessing the fulfilment of his prophecy about himself, so often mentioned to the devotees at Dakshineswar. He had said on various occasions: “Before I pass away, I’ll cast the whole secret to the winds; (that is, I’ll divulge my nature as a God-man)”; “When many come to know (my divine glory) and whisper about it, this case (my body) will cease to be, it will go to pieces by my Mother’s dispensation”; “It will be ascertained at that time (during my illness) which amongst the devotees belong to the inner circle and which to the outer”, and so on. It was here that we could understand the truth of his predictions about Narendranath and other devotees, such as, “Mother has perforce brought you (Narendra) down to the world to do Her work; you cannot but follow me; where else will you go?”; “They all (the boy-devotees) are like the young ones of the Homa bird, that rises very high up in the air where it lays eggs, which start falling towards the earth with great accelerated speed. One is afraid that they will all be shattered to pieces when they reach the ground; but that does not happen. Out of the eggs are hatched young ones, which are fledged and, before touching the ground, they spread their wings and fly up again into the air to reach their parents, who wait for their coming up. Similarly, they (the boy-devotees) also will

renounce the world and go forward towards God before they are chained to the world." Besides, it was here that he moulded the life of Narendranath and placed the circle of devotees, particularly the boy-devotees, in his charge and gave him detailed instructions how to guide them. It needs no mention, therefore, that the work the Master accomplished at Kasipur was fraught with the weightiest significance.

4. The garden house carrying these memories should be acquired by the Ramakrishna Mission

A very strong desire rises naturally in the minds of all, that the said place where the Master accomplished those grave and profound actions of his life, may be associated with the Ramakrishna Mission[1] to serve as a permanent memorial to those blessed deeds of the Master, so that generations of human beings might derive pure joy serene at the holy remembrance. But alas, a very great obstacle to its fulfilment has arisen. The Railway Company, we are told, is trying to acquire it. It is, therefore, superfluous to say that this place of the Master's divine sport will soon assume a different form and be converted perhaps into jute godowns or some such ugly object. But, if that be the will of Providence, what can we, weak mortals, do? Let us, therefore, helplessly console ourselves with the thought: "What exists in the mind of Providence, unavoidably comes true."

Footnote

1. Written by the author and published in the monthly Bengali magazine *Udbodhan,* but not included in the first edition of the book during his lifetime.

2. The garden house of Kasipur

1. Roughly equivalent to 4 2/3 acres.—Tr.

1. The Master’s joy at the beauty and spaciousness of the garden house

CHAPTER XIII—SECTION 2
THE VOW OF SERVICE AT KASIPUR

1. This desire has been recently fulfilled—Tr.

The Master, we have said before, came from Shyampukur to the Kasipur garden on the penultimate day of Agrahayan, inasmuch as custom forbade making a journey to a new place in the month of Paush. The residential house in the garden was more spacious and more secluded than the Shayampukur house which was situated on a road filled throughout the waking hours with the din and noise of the people of the city. In whatever direction one might cast one's look in this Kasipur house, one's eyes were soothed with the green leaves of trees, the bright colours of flowers and the blue and dark-blue hues of the new and old grass in the lawns. Although the beauty of this garden, compared with the wonderful natural beauty of the Kali temple at Dakshineswar, was not worth mentioning, it appeared to the Master to be pleasant after a continuous stay of about four months at Calcutta. As soon as he entered the garden he felt the cheering effect of the open air. Joyously observing everything around, he slowly proceeded towards the main building. As he entered the spacious room on the first floor chosen for him, he was drawn out by the beauty around and came out to the southern side and taking his stand on the terrace of the first storey, enjoyed the beauty of the garden for some time. The Holy Mother too, it was evident, was very pleased, seeing that she would not have to live here cribbed and cabined as in the Shyampukur house and yet would have the opportunity of serving the Master. It is therefore superfluous to say that the joy of the attendants knew no bounds when both of them were so very pleased with the garden house.

2. Both men and money were necessary for the service of the Master. Narendra supplied the men, lay disciples the money

A few days passed in removing inconveniences, big and small, that came to the notice of the attendants. Narendranath thought over them and easily came to understand that more men and money would be required now than ever, if those who had taken upon themselves voluntarily the charge of the Master's service, were also to live at that garden house situated far away from the doctors' houses and clinics. It was evident that unless all matters were thrashed out duly and steps taken from the beginning, difficulties would naturally crop up in the way of their service to the Master. Balaram, Surendra, Ram, Girish, Mahendra and others, who had all along been thinking of the financial side of the matter, found out after due deliberation the ways and means of meeting the expenditure. But as regards the question of men, Narendranath himself would have to think it out as before. He would, therefore, have to spend the greater part of his time at the Kasipur garden. If he did not show the way, many of the young devotees could not do so lest they should incur the displeasure of their guardians or their studies should suffer. For, during the Master's stay at Shyampukur, they used to go home to take their food and come back to engage themselves in his service, which would be impossible for them to do on account of the long distance between Kasipur and Calcutta.

3. Narendra's resolve to stay at the garden house to serve the Master and at leisure to prepare for the Law examination

Narendra was preparing for his Law examination (B.L.) that year. Although it was absolutely necessary for him to stay in Calcutta for his studies and for looking after the suit pending before the High Court regarding the partition of his ancestral property necessitated by the enmity of his kinsmen, he dismissed that idea completely from his mind in order to serve the Guru and decided that he should bring his law books to the Kasipur garden and read them at leisure, if at all possible. Thus, we see that Narendranath's desire to prepare for the Law examination and also to serve the Master was till then firm in his mind. For, having no alternative before him, he had decided that he should pass the Law examination and by a few

years' hard labour earn money sufficient for bare maintenance of his mother and brothers and having made arrangements for them, he should retire from the world and devote himself entirely to the Sadhana of God. But, alas many of us do make such good resolves; but how many succeed? Many of us calculate that we might allow ourselves to be carried so far by the currents of worldliness and then show our inner strength by veering round and swimming against them on to the safe haven of righteousness, and start working accordingly. But how many of us can save ourselves from being caught in the whirlpool and succeed in reaching the shore? Narendranath was the foremost of the first class, spiritual aspirants and received the infinite grace of the Master; what about this resolve of his? Is it also destined, by coming in collision with the world, to be similarly upset and destroyed, and assume a different form in future? Be patient[1], O reader, we shall soon see how and by what path the infallible power of the Master's will made Narendranath reach the Goal.

4. The Master, however, depended as ever, on the Universal Mother alone

We have been so far speaking of what the devotees were doing for the service of the Master. The question may now be asked conveniently, "Did the Master now depend on the devotees for everything without thinking about himself at all? Can we expect such indifference on the part of the Master who, we saw, at Dakshineswar kept a keen eye on the small daily affairs of all concerned and on the worldly and spiritual conditions of each devotee on the one hand, and was having at the same time continual immediate experiences of the truths beyond the Vedas and the Vedantas on the other?" It has to be said in reply that he depended wholly and solely even now, as before, on the Mother of the universe and had his eyes steadfastly fixed on Her alone, from whom he expected all aid and that, whatever service, in amount and kind, he accepted from each devotee, he had known beforehand, was so ordained by the divine Mother Herself and for their own good. The more we proceed to tell the story of the Master's life, the more shall we be acquainted with this important fact.

5. How the Master would make necessary changes in the arrangements

Again, he used to undo the arrangements made by the devotees but not to his liking, sometimes with their knowledge and sometimes without it when he knew they would feel pained thereby. He, for example, called Balaram to him at the time of his coming to Calcutta for treatment and said, Look here, it is quite against my liking that the people should arrange my daily meals by subscription, for, I have never lived so. You may ask how I was doing so at the Kali temple at Dakshineswar inasmuch as the authorities of the temple were all living separately and were jointly carrying on the worship of the temple and therefore they might be said to have maintained me by subscription; in reply it may be said that I had not to maintain myself by subscription; for, it had been, arranged ever since the time of Rasmani that the monthly pay of seven rupees I used to get when I performed the worship should be given to me together with the Prasada of the deities as long as I lived there. It may, therefore, be said that I lived in a way on a pension[1] there. So, please pay personally the expenses for my food as long as I am outside Dakshineswar for treatment." Thus, again, when the garden house at Kasipur was hired for him, he came to know that the monthly rent of that house was a big amount (namely, eighty rupees) and was wondering how his devotees who had to maintain their big families, and many with some difficulty, could possibly bear the expense. He, at last, called to him. Surendranath, his devotee, a superintendent of the Dost Company, and said, "Look here, Surendra, they are all petty clerks or so, and have to maintain their families with difficulty, how can they raise so much money by subscription? Therefore, please pay the whole amount of the rent yourself." Surendra folded his hands and gladly agreed, saying, "As you command." One day the Master was telling us that, owing to weakness, it would soon be difficult for him to go out for answering calls of nature. The young devotee Latu[1] felt pained to hear those words of the Master on that occasion; he made him as well as us smile even in that state of sorrow when with folded hands he chimed in sweet broken Bengali, "Sir, here I am, your sweeper." Thus did the Master make things convenient for the devotees by introducing appropriate re-arrangement of his service.

6. How the circle of his would-be-monk devotees was formed and how it grew in love and service

Good arrangements about everything were being gradually made and all the young devotees, more than the number strictly required for the service, came one after another. Narendra kept them engaged in meditation, devotional exercises, studies, holy conversations, discussions on scriptural topics, etc., in such a way that they did not feel how days slipped by, so absorbed were they in the great joy of all these. The pure, selfless love of the Master on the one hand, and the wonderful spirit of the friendship of Narendra and his noble company on the other, united together to bind them in such a sweet and tender yet hard and unbreakable bond, that they actually began to consider one another to be much more intimately related than the people of the same family, so much so, that if any one had unluckily to go home on some very urgent business on a certain day, he would invariably come back the same evening or the next morning. Although not more than twelve[1] in number, all of them who remained there to the end of the Master's mortal life and completed their vow of service by renouncing the world, loved their Guru as dearly as their lives and were wonderfully dexterous in all manner of work.

7. Slight improvement in the Master's health

One day the Master came downstairs, a few days after he had come to Kasipur, and strolled for a short time along the garden path round the house. The devotees were happy to see it and hoped that he would soon be strong and regain his health if only he could do so every day. But he felt weak the following day, either on account of his catching a chill, owing to the contact with the cold air outside or for some other reason, and could not take a stroll for some time to come. The chill of course passed away in two or three days, but his weakness continued. The doctors, therefore, prescribed for him decoction of kid meat. When he took it that weakness decreased to a great extent in a few days and he felt healthier than before. His health seemed thus improved for about a fortnight since he came there. One day Dr.

Mahendralal also came at this time to see him and was glad to notice the change.

The young attendants had to go to Calcutta every day to tell the doctor about the Master's health and bring meat for his diet. Both of these duties were left at first in charge of one man. That gave rise to great inconvenience; so it was decided that thenceforth two persons should go to Calcutta for those two urgent items of work. If there were any other necessity for going to Calcutta, a third man besides them would go. Moreover, the young devotees began to do all the duties by turns, such as keeping clean the house, going daily to Baranagar to make purchases from the market, rendering personal service to the Master day and night, and so on. Narendranath engaged himself in superintending every action of theirs and in doing whatever work came up suddenly by chance.

8. All cooking was done by the Holy Mother aided by Sister Lakshmi and sometimes by other lady devotees of Calcutta

The Holy Mother, however, was in charge of preparing the Master's diet as before. When any special food was prescribed for the Master, the details of the method of preparing it were learnt from the doctor. And one or two devotees like brother Gopal with whom she did not observe purdah and spoke freely, would go and explain to her the method of cooking it. Besides preparing the diet, the Holy Mother personally used to carry the food to the Master twice daily, once a little before midday and the second time shortly after sunset. She would be waiting in the room till the Master finished his meal, when she took back the cups and plates. Lakshmi Devi, the niece of the Master, was brought to Kasipur to help the Holy Mother in cooking and other work and keep her company. Over and above that, some of those women devotees who visited the Master often at Dakshineswar came here at intervals and stayed with the Holy Mother for a few hours and some times for a day or two. Thus in a week everything was running smoothly.

9. The lay disciples met twice a month at Ram's or Girish's house to discuss financial matters

The householder devotees also were not free from anxiety at that time. They gathered together either in Ram's or Girish's house to decide the maximum service, personal or pecuniary, they could render to their beloved Master. They knew that they could not spare the same time or amount of money every month; hence they had to meet once or twice a month to take decisions beforehand.

10. Narendra inspired the boy-devotees to give up desires and devote themselves entirely to the realization of God

Most of the young devotees did not go home even for a short time till everything began to move in an orderly manner. Those who had unavoidably to go returned in a few hours and sent word home somehow, that they would not be able to go home regularly and live there as usual till the Master had regained his health. It needs no mention that no guardian, when he came to know this, approved of this readily. But what could the guardians do? The brains of the boys had been spoilt, as they put it. They thought that more harm than good might befall them, if they tried to interfere directly. So they allowed the boys to go their own ways, trying all the time to win them over slowly through indirect pressure and persuasion. When both the classes of the devotees, the householders and the Brahmacharins, joined heartily and with determination in the great vow of service to the Master, and everything was going on smoothly like a machine, Narendranath was free from anxiety and, having the time to think about himself, made up his mind to go home soon for a day or two. He made it known to us all at night and went to bed; but he had no sleep. He got up in a short time. Seeing Gopal and one or two others of us awake, he said, "Come, let us go and stroll in the garden and have a smoke." He said, while walking, "The Master is suffering from a fell disease; who can say if he has not made up his mind to give up his body? While there is time yet, let us make as much of spiritual progress as we can by service, meditation, devotional exercises, etc.; otherwise when he passes away, there will be no limit to our repentance. Postponing calling on the Lord till desires are fulfilled? This is exactly how our days are passing and we are getting more

and more entangled in the net of desires. It is these desires only that lead to destruction and death. So let us give up desires; yes, let's give them all up."

11. The boy-devotees burnt desires in the Dhuni fire

The winter night of the month of Paush was drowsing in utter silence. The infinite blue above was looking steadfastly at the earth with a hundred thousand starry eyes; below, the ground under the garden trees was now dry on account of the powerful rays of the sun and well cleaned and fit to sit on. Narendra's mind inclined to dispassion and detachment and, accustomed to meditation, felt, as it were, within it that external silence and was merging in itself. Instead of walking any more he sat down under a tree. Shortly afterwards he saw a dry heap of grass and broken branches of trees and said, "Set fire to it. Holy men light Dhunis under trees at this time. Let us also light a Dhuni and burn up our desires within." A fire was lighted. We pulled along similar heaps of dry fuel lying on all sides and offered them as oblations to that fire, thinking, all the while, that we were offering the desires of our minds as oblations and felt a wonderful bliss. We felt as if all the worldly desires were burnt up and our minds became pure and serene and we were approaching God. We thought, "Ah, why did we not do this before? It has given us so much bliss!" We then resolved to light such Dhunis whenever opportunities should occur. When two or three hours elapsed in that way and no more fuel could be found, we extinguished the fire, returned to our places and went to bed again. It was then past four in the morning. Those who could not join us in lighting the Dhuni felt sorry when they woke up at day-break and heard of it. They were grieved at not being called. Narendranath said by way of consolation to them, "We did not do it according to plan and did not know that we would have so much joy. We shall gather together from now on and light a Dhuni whenever we find time. We need not worry on that account."

Narendra went away to Calcutta in the morning as settled before, and returned to Kasipur in a day with a few law books in his hand.

Footnote

1. But the book was left unfinished by the author who did not tell us the last part of the story.—Tr.

1. The Master used to pronounce the word as “pencil”.

1. He is now well known in the circle of the devotees by the name of Swami Adbhutananda. He was a native of the district of Chhapra. Although he could understand Bengali, there were various peculiarities when he spoke that language, which were very sweet to hear, like the language of a boy.

1. In order to satisfy the curiosity of the reader, the names of those twelve are given below: Narendra, Rakhal, Baburam, Niranjan, Yogindra, Latu, Tarak, brother Gopal (who was the only old man amongst the young devotees), Kali, Sasi, Sarat, and Hutko (‘abruptly appearing’) Gopal. Sarada could stay for a day or two only from time to time owing to hard pressure from his father. Harish came for a few days and went back home and his brain got deranged there. Hari, Tulasi and Gangadhar practised Tapas at home and came there at intervals. Besides these twelve, two others joined with Mahimcharan Chakravarti shortly afterwards and lived in his house.

CHAPTER XIII—SECTION 3
THE MASTER'S SELF-REVELATION AND THE BESTOWAL OF FREEDOM FROM FEAR

1. The Master felt a little better under Dr. Rajendra's treatment

We have already told the reader how one day the Master came out of his room and walked in the garden for a short time. Feeling weak on account of it, he did not venture to do so again for about a fortnight. Although there was no change of treatment during that period, there was a change of the doctor. Rajendranath Datta, born in the family of the rich and famous Akrur Datta of Bowbazar, Calcutta, laboured hard and spent much money over a vast and deep study of Homoeopathy and its propagation in the city. The famous Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar met him and became convinced of the efficacy and efficiency of Homoeopathy and adopted that method in his profession. Rajendra Babu had heard from people of the illness of the Master. He knew that if he could cure him, the reputation of Homoeopathy would be established with many; so he selected a medicine after much study and thought. He was acquainted with Atul, the younger brother of Girish. He, as far as we remember, met Atul somewhere at this time and asked him about the Master's illness. He then expressed his intention of treating the Master and said, "Please tell Mahendra that I have selected a medicine after much thinking. I hope to get good results with it. I like to try it once if he is agreeable." Atul reported this to the devotees and to Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar and as no one had any objection to it, Rajendra Babu came to visit the Master in a few days, listened to the description of the disease from the beginning and administered Lycopodium (200). The Master derived much benefit from it for more than a fortnight. The devotees thought he would perhaps soon become strong and healthy as before.

2. The Master’s self-revelation and blessings to his disciples

Half of the month of Paush passed away and it was the first day of January 1886. As the Master felt rather well that day, he expressed a desire to come out of his room and have a walk in the garden for sometime. It was a holiday and the householder devotees came one by one and in groups shortly after midday. Thus when the Master came downstairs at three in the afternoon, more than thirty people were engaged in conversation in the garden under the trees, or inside the house. As soon as they saw him, all got up out of reverence and bowed down to him. He came down to the garden path through the western door of the hall on the ground floor and was slowly proceeding southward to the gate when all followed him at a little distance. When he came to the middle of the path leading to the gate, he saw Girish, Ram, Atul and a few others, sitting under the trees to the west of the path. They also saw him and saluted him from there and came joyfully to him. The Master addressed Girish all of a sudden before anybody had spoken a word and said, “Girish, you, I find, say to one and all everywhere so many things about me (that I am an incarnation of God), what have you seen and understood (about me) that you do so?” Girish remained completely unmoved and, kneeling down on the ground near the Master’s feet, said in a choked voice with his hands folded and face turned upwards, “What more can I say of Him, whose greatness Vyasa and Valmiki could not find words to express?” The Master was charmed at this fervent utterance of the devoted Girish and blessed all the devotees assembled there through their representative, Girish: “What more shall I say to you? May you all be blessed with the spiritual awakening.” Beside himself with love and compassion for the devotees, hardly had he said those few words when he entered into Bhavasamadhi. Those words of profound blessing, untouched by the slightest tinge of selfishness, directly entered the devotees’ hearts where they raised high billows of bliss. They forgot time and space, forgot the disease of the Master and forgot their previous determination not to touch him till he recovered, and were aware only that out of sympathy for them in their plight, an extraordinary divine Being, feeling excruciating pain at their misery and his heart overflowing with compassion, had come down to them from heaven and called them affectionately to Him for giving protection, like a mother sheltering her

children against all ills by covering them lovingly with the upper part of her Sari. Then they became eager to bow down to him and take the dust of his feet and, filling the quarters with cries of "Victory to Ramakrishna", began saluting him one after another. As they were thus bowing down to him the sea of the Master's compassion transcended all bounds and brought about a wonderful phenomenon. We had almost daily seen the Master at Dakshineswar losing himself in grace and compassion for certain devotees and blessing them by his extraordinary potent touch in the state of divine semi-consciousness. He began touching each of the devotees assembled on that day in that divine mood. The joy of the devotees, it is superfluous to say, knew no bounds at that act of the Master. They felt that he would not henceforward keep concealed the fact of his divinity either from them or from anybody else in the world; and knowing, as they did, nevertheless, their own defects, spiritual destitution and incapability, they had not the slightest doubt that all alike, the sinner as well as the afflicted, would find a refuge at his feet, a touch of which dispelled all fear for ever. Unable to utter a single word owing to that wonderful occurrence, some were only looking steadfastly at him as if they were under the spell of a Mantra, some others called aloud to all within the house to come and be blessed by receiving the Master's grace, and still others collected flowers and worshipped him with them, uttering Mantras. Soon the ecstasy of the Master came to an end and the devotees too were again in the normal state of their consciousness. Bringing thus to an end his walk in the garden that day, he went into the house and sat down in his room.

3. Did the Master act as the wish--fulfilling tree?

Some devotees like Ramchandra have described the happening of that day as the transformation by the Master of himself into the wish-fulfilling tree (Kalpataru). But, it is more reasonable, it seems to us, to call it the "self-revelation of the Master" or "the bestowal of freedom from fear on all devotees by revealing himself". The Kalpataru, it is said, gives to all whatever good or bad they ask for. But the Master did not do so; he made clear through that event the fact of his being a God-man and of his bestowal of protection against and freedom from fear on all, without the slightest

discrimination. Be that as it may, of all the people that felt blessed by having his grace on that day, Haranchandra Das is worthy of being particularly mentioned. For, as soon as he bowed down to him, the Master in ecstasy placed his lotus foot on Haran's head. It is only on a few occasions that we saw him bestow his grace in this way.[1] Ramlal Chattopadhyaya was present there on that occasion and also received the Master's grace. Asked about it, he said, "I could formerly see a part only of the holy person of my chosen Ideal with my mind's eye at the time of meditation—when I saw the lotus feet, I could not see the face; again perhaps I saw the person from the face to the waist, but could not see the holy feet, and whatever I saw never seemed to be alive—but no sooner had the Master touched me that day than the form of my chosen Ideal appeared suddenly from head to foot in the lotus of my heart and moved and looked benign and effulgent,"

4. Who were present during this self-revelation

We remember the names of nine or ten only of the persons who were present on the spot during this day's occurrence. They are Girish, Atul, Ram, Navagopal, Haramohan, Vaikuntha, Kishori (Ray), Haran, Ramlal and Akshay. Mahendranath (the writer of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna)* was also perhaps present. But it is a matter for wonder that none of the Sannyasi devotees of the Master was present there that day. Narendranath and many others of them had been engaged in Sadhana besides the Master's service etc., in the previous night for long hours and, feeling tired, they were sleeping within the house. Although Latu and Sarat were awake and saw what was taking place from the roof of the first floor to the south of the Master's room, they refrained voluntarily from going there. For, as soon as the Master went downstairs to have a walk in the garden, they put his bedding etc., in the sun and were cleaning the room. Thinking that it might cause inconvenience to the Master if they left their duty half-finished, they did not feel inclined to go there.

5. Vaikunthanath pestered the Master for having spiritual experiences

We asked a few others including Vaikunthanath about their experience on that day. We shall bring this subject, to a close by recording what Vaikuntha had told us. Vaikuntha met the Master at about the same time as we did. We have already mentioned something of how the Master gave him instructions, and moulded his life since then. The Master rendered his life full of bliss by initiating him in a Mantra. Vaikuntha engaged himself in Sadhana since that time and was striving his best that he might have the vision of his chosen Ideal. Knowing that he could not succeed in his attempt without the Master's grace, he was from time to time plaintively praying to him for it, especially when the Master became physically ill and came to Calcutta and then to Kasipur for treatment. During this period also, twice or thrice, Vaikuntha got the opportunity of humbly beseeching him for the fulfilment of his heart's desire. The Master smiled graciously, solaced him, and said, "Why don't you wait? Let the disease of the body be cured a little and I shall do everything for you."

6. How he felt at the touch of the Master

Vaikuntha was present on the spot of this day's occurrence. As soon as the Master had blessed two or three of the devotees by his extraordinary powerful touch, Vaikuntha came before him, bowed down to him with devotion and said, "Sir, please bestow your grace on me." The Master said, "But you have been given everything." "When you say", said Vaikuntha, "everything has been given, it is certainly so; but kindly do so, that I can understand it more or less." Saying "So be it", the Master touched his chest only for a moment in an ordinary way. "But", said Vaikuntha, "as the result of it, a great revolution took place in my mind. I saw the figure of the Master lit up with a gracious smile in the sky, in the houses, trees, plants, men and in whatever else I looked. I did not know how to contain my delight within myself and, seeing then you two on the roof, I called aloud saying, 'O you all, wherever you may be, come without delay.' That mental attitude and vision of mine continued for some days throughout my waking state. I became amazed and charmed with the holy vision of the Master in all things. It continued to be so wherever I went, to office or elsewhere on any business.

7. Without due preparation high spiritual experiences cannot be retained

"I could not attend to the work on hand and it suffered. I tried to forget that vision for some time when I found that work was suffering, but failed. I then understood a little of why Arjuna felt afraid to see the universal form of the divine Lord and prayed to Him to withdraw it. Remembering the statement of the scriptures that liberated souls always remain in the same elevated state, I could then but catch a glimpse of the extent of desirelessness the mind has to develop to have the capacity to remain in that high state. For, hardly had a few days passed when I felt it difficult to live in the same mental attitude and with the same vision. Sometimes it occurred to me, 'Am I going mad?' I then prayed to the Master again with fear, 'O lord, I am not able to contain this mental state; please ordain that it may come to end.' I now think, 'Woe be to human weakness and stupidity! Why did I pray so? Why did I not keep my faith firm in him? And why did I not wait patiently to see its ultimate developments? I might at most have become mad or the body might have dropped off." But as soon as I prayed in that manner, the said vision and mental state came to an end one day. My firm conviction is that they were removed by the same extraordinary being from whom I had got them. But he preserved compassionately a small part of it; perhaps because there arose no prayer in my mind for its complete removal. I felt blessed and amazed at the sudden appearance of this vision a few times daily—the vision of the gracious figure of the Master made effulgent by the divine mood."

Footnote

1. Haranchandra of Beliaghata had a job in the office of Messrs. Findlay Mayor Company. The last few years of his life he used to celebrate an annual festival in memory of the grace the Master bestowed on him on this occasion.

CHRONOLOGY OF IMPORTANT EVENTS

Year	*Events*
1775	Birth of Kshudiram.
1791	Birth of Chandradevi.
1799	Kshudiram's marriage with Chandradevi.
1805	Birth of Ramkumar.
1810	Birth of Katyayani.
1815	Kshudiram settles in Kamarpukur.
1821	Marriage of Ramkumar; Marriage of Katyayani.
1824	Kshudiram's pilgrimage to Rameswaram.
1826	Birth of Rameswar.
1835	Kshudiram's pilgrimage to Kasi and Gaya.
1836	Birth of Sri Ramakrishna, Thursday, February 18, about 5 a.m.
1840	Birth of Sarvamangala.
1843	Death of Kshudiram.
1845	Sri Ramakrishna's sacred thread ceremony.
1848	Marriage of Rameswar; Marriage of Sarvamangala.
1849	Birth of Akshay.
1850	Ramkumar opens a Sanskrit school in Calcutta.
1852	Sri Ramakrishna comes to Calcutta.
1853	Birth of the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, December 22.

1855 The consecration ceremony of the Kali temple at Dakshineswar, May 31. Sri Ramakrishna's appointment as the priest of Sri Radhakanta temple and then of the Kali temple. Hriday comes to Dakshineswar.

1856 Death of Ramkumar. Sri Ramakrishna's first divine inebriation and the divine vision.

1857 Sri Ramakrishna's treatment under Dr. Gangaprasad Sen. Sri Ramakrishna corrects Rani Rasmani.

1858 Haladhari's appointment as the priest of the Kali Temple. Sri Ramakrishna's visit to Kamarpukur.

1859 Sri Ramakrishna's marriage with the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi in May.

1860 Sri Ramakrishna's return to Dakshineswar. Mathur's vision of Sri Ramkrishna as Siva and Kali.

1861 Death of Rani Rasmani. Bhairavi Brahmani comes to Dakshineswar. Sri Ramakrishna's Tantric Sadhana.

1863 Completion of Tantric Sadhana.

1864 Chandradevi settles at Dakshineswar. Sri Ramakrishna's practice of Vatsalya Bhava under Jatadhari. Practice of Madhura Bhava. Initiation into Sannyasa by Tota Puri.

1865 The appointment of Akshay as the priest of Sri Radhakanta temple in place of Haladhari. Tota Puri leaves Dakshineswar. Sri Ramakrishna in Nirvikalpa Samadhi for Six months. His Islamic Sadhana.

1867 Sri Ramakrishna at Kamarpukur with Bhairavi Brahamani. The Holy Mother's arrival at Kamarpukur. The Bhairavi leaves.

1868 Sri Ramakrishna's pilgrimage with Mathur. His meeting with Gangamata in Brindavan.

1869 Death of Akshay.

1870 Sri Ramakrishna's tour with Mathur. His visit to Kalutola Harisabha, Kalna and Navadwip.

1871 Death of Mathur.

1872 The Holy Mother's first visit to Dakshineswar. Sri Ramakrishna performs the Shodasi Puja.

1873 The death of Rameswar.

1874 The Holy Mother's second visit to Dakshineswar.

1875 Sri Ramakrishna's first meeting with Kesav Chandra Sen.

1876 Death of Chandradevi.

1877 The Holy Mother's third visit to Dakshineswar.

1879 Sri Ramakrishna's marked devotees started coming.

1880 Sri Ramakrishna's last visit to Kamarpukur.

1881 Sri Ramakrishna's first meeting with Rakhal and Narendra. The Holy Mother's fourth visit to Dakshineswar. Dismissal of Hriday.

1882 Sri Ramakrishna's meeting with Pandit Vidyasagar. The Holy Mother's fifth visit to Dakshineswar.

1883 Sri Ramakrishna meets Swami Saradananda (the author) for the first time.

1884 Sri Ramakrishna's first meeting with Gopala's Mother. Death of Kesav. The Holy Mother comes to live at Dakshineswar.

1885 Sri Ramakrishna's last visit to Panihati. His illness and shift to Shyampukur and then to Kasipur for treatment.

1886 Sri Ramakrishna's self-revealation on January, 1 (Kalpataru Day). Organisation of disciples. Mahasamadhi on August, 16, about 1 a.m.

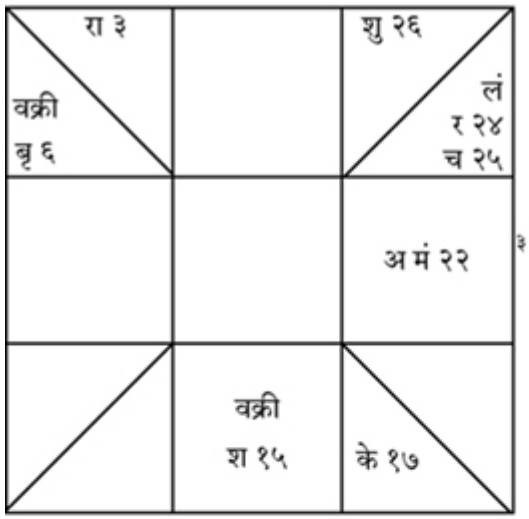
THE HOROSCOPE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

By Narayanachandra Jyotirbhushana

शुभमस्तु । शकनरपतेरतीताब्वदादयः १७५७ । १० । ५ । ५९ । २८ । २९ । सन १२४२ साल । एतच्छकीय-सौर-फाल्गुनस्य षष्ठदिवसे, बुधवासरे, शुक्लपक्षद्वितीयायां तिथौ, पूर्वभाद्रपदनक्षत्रस्य प्रथमचरणे, सिद्धयोगे, वालवकरणे, (लग्नस्फुटराश्यादिः १० । ३ । १९' । ५३'' । २०''') शनैश्चरस्य क्षेत्रे सूर्यस्य होरायां सूर्यसुतस्य द्रेक्काण शुक्रस्य नवांशे बृहस्पतेर्द्वादशांशे कुजस्य त्रिंशांशे एवं षड्वर्गपरिशोधिते पूर्वभाद्रपद-नक्षत्राश्रितकुम्मराशिस्थिते चन्द्रे बुधस्य यामार्द्धे जीवस्य दण्डे कोणस्थे गुरौ केन्द्रस्थे बुधे चन्द्रे च लग्नस्थे चन्द्रे त्रिग्रहयोगे धर्मकर्माधिपयोः शुक्रभौमयोः तुङ्गस्थितयोः वर्गोत्तमस्थे लग्नाधिपे शनौ च तुङ्गे पराशरमतेन तु राहुकेत्वोस्तुङ्गस्थयोः (यतः उक्तं ''राहोस्तु वृषभं केतोर्वृश्चिकं तुङ्गसंगितम्'' इत्यादिप्रमाणात्) अत एव उच्चस्थे ग्रहपञ्चके असाधारणपुण्यभाग्ययोगे शुक्लपक्षे निशि जन्महेतोः विंशोत्तरी-दशाधिकारे जन्म एतेन बृहस्पतेर्दशायां तथा देशभेदेन दशाधिकारनियमाच्च अष्टोत्तरीयराहौर्दशायां अशेषगुणा-लङ्कृत-स्वधर्मनिष्ठ-क्षुदिरामचट्टोपाध्याय-महोदयस्य (सहधर्मिणी-चन्द्रमणिदेवी-महोदयायाः गर्भे) शुभः तृतीयपुत्रः समजनि ।

तस्य राश्याश्रितं नाम शम्भुरामदेवशर्मा । प्रसिद्धनाम गदाधरचट्टोपाध्यायः । साधनासिद्धिप्राप्त-जगद्विख्यातनाम श्रीरामकृष्ण-परमहंसदेवमहोदयः ॥

जन्मकुण्डली—



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चान्द्रफाल्गुनस्य शुक्लपक्षीयद्वितीया जन्मतिथिः ।

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जन्मकोष्ठीफलम्—

धर्मस्थानाधिपे तुङ्गे धर्मस्थे तुङ्गेखेचरे ।
गुरुणा दृष्टिसंयोगे लग्नेशे धर्मसंस्थिते ॥
केन्द्रस्थानगते सौम्ये गुरौ चैव तु कोणभे ।
स्थिरलग्ने यदा जन्म सम्प्रदायप्रभुर्हि सः ॥
धर्मविन्माननीयस्तु पुणयकर्मरतः सदा ।
देवमन्दिरवासी च बहुशिष्यसमन्वितः ॥
महापुरुषसंज्ञोऽयं नारायणांशसम्भवः ।
सर्वत्र जनपूज्यश्च भविष्यति न संशयः ॥
इति भृगुसंहितायां सम्प्रदायप्रभुयोगः तत्फलं च ॥

Sri Ramakrishna was born in the year A.D. 1836 on the 2nd day of the bright fortnight of the month when the sun was in the zodiac of Aquarius *(Kumbha*- February 18), early in the morning at about 5 a.m. His birth took place when it was *Siddhi Yoga* owing to the auspicious union of *Sukla Dwitiya* with *Purvabhadrapada Nakshatra.* His natal star was *Purvabhadrapada* (Pegasi), the twenty-fifth lunar mansion. In his *Janmalagna, i.e.,* in the zodiac at the time of his birth, there was the conjunction of the three planets, *viz.,* the Sun, the Moon and Mercury *(Surya, Chandra* and *Budha)* and the other three planets, namely, Venus, Mars and Saturn *(Sukra, Mangala* and *Sani)* were in exaltation in the 12th, 10th, and 7th houses respectively. And again, according to the sage Parasara, the planets *Rahu* and *Ketu* (two other ascending nodes of the moon) also occupied the highest positions as they were in the 2nd and 8th houses respectively; Jupiter *(Brihaspati)* occupied the 3rd house and so it had a tendency towards ascendancy *(Tungavilasi).* The result of this natal arrangement of the planets is, according to *Bhrigu Samhita,* that the man becomes the head of a religious movement, virtuous, highly honoured, always engaged in doing virtuous deeds; he lives in a temple, and gets a large following of disciples; he is called a great man by all, and is born of the spirit of Lord Narayana; he is worshipped by all.

Swami Saradananda

He wrote Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lilaprasanga *(Original Bengali version of Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master)* in this room at Udbodhan House, Kolkata.

THE BOOK AND ITS AUTHOR

This is the first complete English version of *Sri Ramakrishna Lila-prasanga,* a faithful record and exposition in Bengali of the various aspects of the life of Sri Ramakrishna (1836-86), whom the late reputed French savant Romain Rolland introduced to the Western world as "the Messiah of Bengal". Indeed, Sri Ramakrishna's life was a significant spiritual event of the last century. His chief disciple, Swami Vivekananda, declared, "His (Ramakrishna's) life was a thousandfold more than his teaching, a living commentary on the texts of the Upanishads, nay, he was the spirit of the Upanishads living in human form. Nowhere else in this world exists that unique perfection, that wonderful kindness for all that does not stop to justify itself, that intense sympathy for man in bondage. He lived to root out all distinction between man and woman, the rich and the poor, the literate and the illiterate, the Brahmanas and the Chandalas. . . He came to bring about the synthesis of the Eastern and Western Civilizations. Indeed, not for many a century past India produced so great, so wonderful a teacher of religious synthesis. ... The new dispensation of the age is the source of great good to the whole world, specially to India; and the inspirer of this dispensation, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, is the reformed and remodelled manifestation of all the past great epoch-makers in religion." Such a life may be presented and interpreted only by a thoroughly rational mind endowed with a high order of intuitive insight and almost an encyclopaedic knowledge of the spiritual realm.

Sri Ramakrishna Lila-prasanga, the original Bengali biography of Sri Ramakrishna, based as it is on first-hand observation, assiduous collection of materials from different sources, patient sifting of evidence by way of an earnest effort for precision, and backed up by lucid interpretation of all relevant intricate problems connected with religious theories and practices, may easily be ranked as one of the best specimens of hagiographic literature.

The book was published serially in five volumes in Bengali. The first two volumes (Parts III & IV) contain illuminating discourse by way of explaining and illustrating the aspect of Sri Ramakrishna as a Guru (spiritual guide). His early days and his vigorous spiritual practices in youth are delineated in the following two volumes (Parts I & II) respectively. The last (Part V) depicts the manifestation of Divinity in and through the life of Sri Ramakrishna.

But, unfortunately, the book was incomplete. It did not cover the last few months of Sri Ramakrishna's life. However, Romain Rolland was perfectly justified in stating, "Incomplete though the work remains, it is excellent for the subject."

Regarding the author, the French savant cogently remarks; that he "is an authority both as a philosopher and as a historian. His books are rich in metaphysical sketches, which place the spiritual appearance of Ramakrishna exactly in its place in the rich procession of Hindu thought." Really, the masterly treatment of the subject gives a glimpse of the marvellous capacity of the author. His wide experience, vast erudition, spirit of rational enquiry and, above all, his far-reaching spiritual achievements may be discerned even by a casual reader of the book.

An acquaintance with some details of the author's life, may prove interesting and helpful to the readers of the present English publication of the work. It will enable them to appreciate its worth as an authentic and comprehensive record of an epoch-making spiritual phenomenon, the hallowed life of Sri Ramakrishna. Hence the following outline:

The author was Swami Saradananda, one of the outstanding monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. Before he took orders his name was Sarat Chandra Chakravarty. He was born in December 1865, of a fairly well-to-do Brahmin family residing in central Calcutta.

His early life showed unmistakable signs of a saint in the making. Sedate and polite by nature, he had a robust physique, a sharp intellect and a highly sympathetic heart. Easily the best boy of his class, Sarat Chandra made his mark also in the debating society of his school, though it was not possible for him to hurt anybody's feelings by a harsh word or a caustic taunt. His loving heart invariably prompted him to serve any ailing acquaintance, be

he a relative, a friend, a neighbour or a menial,—and this even if the disease was an infectious one. To crown all, a remarkable feature of Sarat Chandra's mental make-up was its precocious bias for religion. Even as a little boy he evinced an instinctive craving for religious rites. Mimic worship was the child's favourite play. As he grew up, this play gradually turned into the most serious pursuit of his life.

Born of an orthodox Brahmin family, he inherited a profound reverence for the traditional Hindu religion. Towards the end of his school-days his faith was fairly secured on rational grounds as he came in touch with a sophisticated form of Hinduism through the New Dispensation Movement of the Brahmo Samaj. His ardour for spiritual growth got a fresh stimulus when in St. Xavier's College he contacted the Holy Bible and became inspired by the life and teachings of Jesus. Lastly, it was during his college-days that he lighted upon an exalted spiritual guide who resolved all his possible doubts regarding the truth behind all religions, and by whose surging spiritual power the course of Sarat Chandra's life was entirely changed.

The spiritual guide was Sri Ramakrishna, then known as the Saint of Dakshineswar, a northern suburb of Calcutta. The news of a towering spiritual personality residing in a Kali temple in that suburb had been spreading for some years among the Calcutta public through several Calcutta journals, particularly under the auspices of the Brahmo Samaj. This was drawing a stream of pious visitors, young and old, from Calcutta to meet the saint. Sarat Chandra and his cousin Sasi (later Swami Ramakrishnananda) were caught in the current. Both of them were then college students and were in their teens when one day in October 1883, they went over to pay their respects to the saint.

Sri Ramakrishna appeared to be waiting for such pious young souls. As soon as he met them, he hailed them with delight and made them his own by his endearing and edifying talks. By his sweet and simple words he burnt deep into their minds the supreme need of renouncing sense-enjoyments for realizing God. They felt instinctively that in Sri Ramakrishna they had found a worthy guide on the spiritual path.

After this first visit Sarat Chandra made it a point to come alone to meet the saint every Thursday, which was a holiday in his college. The

enchantment of Sri Ramakrishna's incomparably pure and selfless love was upon him, and as days went on, he began to feel an irresistible attraction towards the holy man. Through repeated contact with him Sarat Chandra's ideas about practical religion became clearer and clearer, and he advanced step by step on the spiritual path as directed by Sri Ramakrishna.

Even in his early youth, Sarat Chandra's spiritual aspirations were pitched very high. He was not after washy sentiments, nor even after visions. God in any particular form was not his quest. He wanted to see Him manifested in all creatures. Though told by Sri Ramakrishna that this was the finale of spiritual attainment and could not be easily achieved, Sarat Chandra said that nothing else could satisfy him, and that he was determined to get to that blessed state, whatever difficulties might stand in the way. Evidently Sri Ramakrishna was pleased to find such a prodigious mental calibre in the young aspirant, and suggested that the latter should make friends with Narendranath (later Swami Vivekananda), a potential spiritual giant.

Within a year of his first visit to the saint, Sarat Chandra came to be attached to Narendranath by a bond of intimate friendship. One day in October 1884, hearing from Narendranath about his marvellous mystic experiences connected with Sri Ramakrishna, Sarat Chandra's perspective of the Saint of Dakshineswar became radically changed. He perceived that Sri Ramakrishna was not merely a saint but a spiritual personage ranking with the Prophets and Incarnations he had heard about.

Naturally, after the above incident, Sarat Chandra's love and esteem for Sri Ramakrishna soared to spontaneous adoration of Divinity in the garb of the holy man. With unquestioned faith he resigned himself to the loving care and guidance of the saint as his Guru, and devoted himself heart and soul to spiritual practice, as far as the limits of his home environment and academic career would allow. Sri Ramakrishna, on his part, recognizing in Sarat an aspiring soul of a very high order with a brilliant past, poured out his unstinted grace upon the young disciple and vitalized his budding spiritual genius.

Things went on smoothly till the middle of the year 1885, when Sri Ramakrishna was laid up with a serious attack of throat trouble (cancer) and was brought to a rented house in the quarter of Calcutta for treatment. The

alarming news came to Sarat Chandra like a bolt from the blue. The terrible shock he received, however, served eventually as a fillip to his spiritual progress. The moorings of worldly life seemed immediately to give way. With anxious concern for the health of his beloved Guru, he rushed to his bed-side, playing truant from his home and bidding adieu to the Calcutta Medical College, which he had recently joined. Shortly, he began to live day and night with Sri Ramakrishna, and followed him when after about four months he was removed to a garden house in Kasipur, a northern suburb of Calcutta. With his phenomenal zeal for nursing, Sarat Chandra kept on tending the Master till the last moment of the latter's earthly life.

Sri Ramakrishna's illness lasting for about a year proved to be a signal, as it were, for his picked, young disciples to tear themselves away from their home life and be eventually banded together into an incipient holy brotherhood under their preeminent leader Narendranath. They came obviously to nurse their beloved Guru, but stayed on to be drilled into monastic life. It was in the Kasipur garden house that one day Sarat Chandra with most of his comrades received from Sri Ramakrishna the ochre cloth, the distinct garb of a Hindu monk. It was here that, under the Master's instructions and encouragement, they learnt to beg their food like Sannyasins in order to practise complete resignation to Providence as well as to purge their minds of deep-rooted egotistic tendencies. Thus inspired by their Guru with the highest spiritual ideals, and ushered symbolically into monasticism, they forgot all other concerns except the service of their beloved Master and an intense devotion to spiritual practice.

In this way the lofty aim of realizing God was rooted deeply in their minds. The world and its humdrum affairs had no attraction for them. And this state of their minds became more intense after the Master passed away in August 1886. Soon after that, a monastery was started for them in a rented house at Baranagar, not far from the Kasipur garden house. Though for a time Sarat Chandra returned home reluctantly, yet as soon as the monastery was started, he began to visit it off and on and spend long hours in the company of his comrades, absorbed in spiritual practice or in talks about the life and teachings of the Master. Apprehending that his eldest son Sarat was tending to be a recluse, and failing to turn his mind towards worldly life by arguments; Sarat's father, Girish Chandra, took the extreme

step of cutting off all contacts of his son with his fellow disciples by locking him up in a room. Unruffled, Sarat Chandra accepted the unenviable solitary confinement in his own house, and fully utilized his loneliness in focussing his mind on his spiritual objective. However, one day when one of his sympathetic younger brothers furtively unlocked the room, Sarat Chandra silently walked out of the house and went straight to the Baranagar monastery. Shortly after this, he and some of his brother disciples assembled in the village home of Baburam (later Swami Premananda), and there, inspired by their leader Narendranath's exhortation during a night-long vigil round a sacred fire, they took the solemn vow of Sannyasa, that is, monasticism for life.

Thus, step by step and without any fuss, Sarat Chandra forged ahead on the path chalked out for Hindu monks. A period of austere monastic life in the Baranagar monastery followed. Without paying any heed to the meagre allowance of food and dress that the slender resources of the monastery provided for these educated middle-class youths, they braced themselves up for the arduous task of realizing the Divine. No other concern could stand in the way of their one-pointed spiritual endeavour. Meditation, hymns, prayers, scriptural study and discussion on religious topics were all that absorbed most of their time and energy.

Thus the young spiritual aspirants kept themselves busy and were not in a mood to rest before they reached their goal. On one auspicious day in the Baranagar monastery, they performed the prescribed sacred rite known as Viraja Homa and thus ceremonially joined the traditional Hindu monastic order. Though their monastic life was virtually started by Sri Ramakrishna during his last days in the Kasipur garden house, and was reinforced by their solemn vows in the village home of Baburam under the inspiration of Narendranath, it was from this day that they commenced a new life as sanctioned by Hindu religious texts. Wiping out all previous impressions about their castes and social positions related to the families of their birth, they discarded even their previous names and titles. From this day Sarat Chandra came to be known as Swami Saradananda.

Soon, however, Saradananda, like most of the inmates of the Baranagar monastery, was seized by a passion for leading the lonely life of a wandering monk (Parivrajaka). Even the company of his brothers as well as

the comparatively secure life within the monastery sat on his nerves as an unbearable bondage. He felt an indomitable urge for moving about from place to place as an unfettered soul in pursuit of his spiritual aim, depending absolutely on God for food and shelter. Sacred cities, river banks and Himalayan retreats, rich with spiritual associations piled up by saints and sages through scores of centuries, made their irresistible appeal to his pure mind.

His first sojourn outside the Baranagar monastery was at Puri, the sea-side holy city of Jagannath. After a time he came back, and went out again to spend a considerable time in various sacred places in Northern India. Through Banaras and Ayodhya he proceeded to Hrishikesh, where, absorbed in spiritual practice, he stayed on for some months leading the traditional life of Hindu monks. In the summer of 1890, he climbed up the Himalayas to visit Kedarnath, Tunganath and Badrinarayan, and in July came down to Almora, where within a month he met Swami Vivekananda. With the latter he went again to Hrishikesh through the Garhwal State. Then, after spending some time in Meerut and Delhi with Swami Vivekananda, he went down to Banaras, visiting on the way holy places like Mathura, Vrindavan and Prayag (Allahabad). After another period of intense spiritual practice in the holy city of Banaras, he had an attack of blood dysentery, which eventually brought him back to the Baranagar monastery in September 1891. On recovery, he went to Jayramvati to pay his respects to the spiritual consort of Sri Ramakrishna, known to the devotees as the Holy Mother.

The itinerary of a wandering monk like Swami Saradananda may be followed in detail, but the path traversed by his mind speeding through spiritual experiences cannot be mapped. How, when and by what stages his spiritual genius unfolded itself completely, cannot be traced. Thus the most interesting and substantial contents of his life remained like a sealed book in the bosom of the sage.

In 1892 the monastery was shifted from Baranagar to Alambazar, a place nearer to the Dakshineswar temple. For a fairly long time before and after that, the brotherhood had no knowledge of the whereabouts of their leader Narendranath, till they were thrilled to learn that their itinerant brother had crossed the seas and burst upon the American society in the wake of the

Chicago Parliament of Religions as Swami Vivekananda, the Cyclonic Monk of India. From March 1894, the latter kept himself in touch with the brotherhood of the Alambazar monastery through regular correspondence, and went on inspiring it to step out of the traditional monastic seclusion and to inaugurate a new Order of Hindu monks accepting as its motto individual salvation together with the service of deified humanity. Two years later he called Swami Saradananda to assist him in his Vedanta movement in the West. Accordingly, on the first of April 1896, Swami Saradananda reached London, where about a month later Swami Vivekananda arrived for the second time from America.

After delivering a few discourses in London, Swami Saradananda had to go over to the United States and join the Vedanta Society that had already been established by Swami Vivekananda in New York. There he set about doing some solid work through his interesting lectures on the Vedanta and the ideas and ideals of the Hindus as well as through his edifying classes on the Yoga System. He made precious contributions to the Greenacre Conference of Comparative Religions, the Brooklyn Ethical Association and to the interested *elite* of Boston and New York by way of introducing the Hindu view of life to the American public. His talks coming out of the fullness of the heart had a marked effect on the audience. Besides, his calm, dignified and courteous bearing, his catholic outlook and universal love won for him many friends and admirers over there. Under his vigilant care the Vedanta Society in New York was being placed on a sound footing, when a call from the leader made him cut short his work in the West and sail for India *via* Europe on the 12th of January, 1898.

Swami Vivekananda, the leader, had come back to India in January 1897, and in the midst of a hectic period of broadcasting his message practically all over India, from Colombo to Almora, he had started working breathlessly at the foundation of the Ramakrishna Order of monks and the Ramakrishna Mission. On the first of May of the same year, he inaugurated the Ramakrishna Mission, an Association of lay and monastic members for carrying on spiritual and humanitarian work. Within a year after his arrival, the monastery at Alambazar was shifted temporarily to Nilambar Mukherjee's garden house at Belur, where close by, on the western bank of the Ganga, a suitable site was purchased for building up a permanent

monastery for the brotherhood; At this stage Swami Saradananda's service was requisitioned for piloting the Ramakrishna Mission as its Secretary as well as for organizing the management of the monastery.

Swami Saradananda reached the monastery in the above garden house early in February 1898 and took up the responsible duties allotted to him. At the beginning of the next year the monastery was shifted to its permanent site now known as the Belur Math, and within a couple of years after that Swami Vivekananda placed the monastic organization on a stable legal basis by executing a Trust-Deed and incorporating in that organization the ideas, ideals and activities for which the Ramakrishna Mission Association had been started. In this new set-up also Swami Saradananda was chosen by the leader to function as its Secretary. It may be mentioned that later on, when for certain practical considerations the Ramakrishna Math and Mission were split up into two parallel organizations, the Swami continued to direct the affairs of both of them as their Secretary. With the allegiance of a faithful follower, Swami Saradananda stuck to this post right up to the end of his life, considering it to be a sacred task entrusted to him by Swami Vivekananda.

However, Swami Saradananda, equipped with his fresh experience of the Western methods of organization, quickly brought the internal affairs of the monastery into perfect order. Under his care and guidance, a routine life divided between spiritual practice, scriptural study and household jobs went on like clock-work within the monastery. Moreover, with his knowledge of the needs and temperaments of the Western people, he applied himself in right earnest to training up preachers for the West from among the deserving young monks.

On the top of these, he had to attend to quite a number of occasional duties at the instance of the leader. Within a few months of his arrival from America, he had to take an active part in conducting the Ramakrishna Mission plague relief work in Calcutta; several months later he had to act as a guide for some Western disciples of Swami Vivekananda in their tour through a number of historical sites in Northern India. Early next year, shortly after the monastery had been shifted to its permanent site, he had to engage himself in collecting funds for the Belur Math in the course of a lecturing tour through some of the important States in Rajasthan and

Sourashtra in Northwestern India. Coming back to the Math shortly before Swami Vivekananda left for his second visit to the West, he devoted himself with his usual zeal to his normal duties within the monastery. Towards the end of the year he visited some important towns in Eastern Bengal, and roused the spiritual fervour of the interested people in those parts by his inspiring talks and instructions.

Swami Vivekananda returned from his second tour in the West towards the end of 1900; he executed the Belur Math Trust-Deed in January 1901; and in July 1902 he passed away, leaving the Ramakrishna Math and Mission to the care of the Trustees, of whom Swami Brahmananda and Swami Saradananda held the pivotal positions of the President and the Secretary respectively. In spite of the severe shock of separation from their beloved and esteemed leader, Swami Saradananda proceeded to shoulder the onerous responsibility of the day-to-day administration of the Math and Mission under the inspired guidance of the President Swami Brahmananda, the spiritual child of Sri Ramakrishna.

Shortly, Swami Saradananda took upon himself the additional task of running and editing the Bengali monthly magazine, *Udbodhan,* that had been started about three years back under the direction of Swami Vivekananda and was being ably conducted by one of his brilliant colleagues, Swami Trigunatitananda. As the latter had to leave India for joining one of the preaching centres of the Mission in the United States, the magazine was about to stop for want of a capable organizer, when Swami Saradananda stepped in. Under his efficient and persevering care the *Udbodhan* went on gaining in popularity, as had been desired by the departed leader, and its financial condition gradually looked up. After several years of keen struggle and hard work it became possible for the Swami to move the *Udbodhan* Office to a permanent house of its own.

It was to find a permanent Calcutta residence for the Holy Mother that the Swami felt the urge of getting up the building as quickly as possible, even by incurring a loan on his own responsibility. The upper storey of the house was reserved for her Residence when she would come to stay in Calcutta in order to bless the monks and novitiates of the Ramakrishna Order as well as hundreds of devotees from far and near. She graced this house by her first visit on May 23, 1909. Of course, the additional purpose

of the house was to accommodate the office of the *Udbodhan,* which was fast developing into a publication concern mainly of Bengali books comprising mostly of what is known as Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature. The ground-floor was set apart for this. This is why even to this day the house is known to the devotees as the Mother's house, and to the general public as the *Udbodhan* Office.

However, it was to pay off this loan that Swami Saradananda hit upon the idea of writing and publishing an authentic biography of Sri Ramakrishna. With supreme enthusiasm he bent himself to see through the work, sharing all the time the ever-increasing burden of directing the affairs of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. He vigorously applied himself to collecting all available data and sifting them with scrupulous care in order to bring out a correct account of the Master's life, as far as that was possible, relying on nothing but indubitable evidences. Day in, day out, year after year, the Swami would remain absorbed in this work before a tiny writing desk in a small room, though distracted now and then by visitors or by pressing duties in connection with the Math and Mission. This was the genesis of the brilliant Bengali production, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lila-prasanga,* that came out first serially as articles in the *Udbodhan* since 1909 and then in five volumes between the years 1911 and 1918.

In 1909 the Ramakrishna Mission was organized as a separate body for carrying on philanthropic and educational activities among all sections of people, irrespective of caste, creed or colour. Branch centres of the Ramakrishna Mission as well as those of the Ramakrishna Math were opened one after another in different parts of India and in certain foreign lands, and these went on multiplying as years rolled on. Besides, occasional relief works during wide-spread calamities due to floods, famines, earthquakes or epidemics in this country had to be organized and conducted from time to time. Naturally, the task of piloting all these as the Secretary of both the Math and the Mission became more and more arduous as years went by. Yet Swami Saradananda was always found equal to the occasion. With his usual calmness he would silently and unostentatiously direct the affairs, meeting embarrassing situations sometimes and solving many a complicated problem arising out of them. It was through his bold and sagacious handling that a number of political inspects aspiring for spiritual

life could join the Ramakrishna *0rder* and put in valuable work unmolested by the Government. When the political authorities looked askance at even social service organizations, it was through his efforts that the Ramakrishna Mission could carry on its activities unhampered by any governmental measure.

Beneath the intense and multifarious activities of Swami Saradananda, one may perceive the supernormal lineaments of his inner life. It is through a seer's responses to the world outside that one may possibly get a clue to the source of his inspiration and energy. The following incidents of Swami Saradananda's life obviously give such a clue.

Towards the end of 1898, while he was travelling in a tonga from Rawalpindi to Srinagar in Kashmir in order to meet Swami Vivekananda and his party, he gave a convincing proof of his marvellous equanimity in the face of a perilous situation. It so happened that all of a sudden the horse took fright and crazily rushed downhill with the vehicle at a breakneck speed. Luckily, its mad career was arrested some way down by a big tree standing on the sloping hill-side, when Swami Saradananda quietly came out of the carriage. At that very moment a heavy boulder crashed down from above and, sparing his person by a few inches, fell upon the horse and killed it on the spot. Absolutely calm all through the incident that might very well have cost his life, the Swami remained a disinterested witness of the entire scene like a true Sthitaprajna, one whose consciousness is anchored in the higher Self.

The extraordinary quietude of a liberated soul before a precarious situation was also demonstrated through some other thrilling incidents of his life. On his voyage to London in 1896, when his ship was overtaken by a cyclone in the Mediterranean, the Swami sat unmoved, witnessing dispassionately the panicky stampede and desperate cries all about him. On another occasion, later in life, while crossing the Ganga in a country boat that was about to be capsized by a violent storm, the Swami sat unperturbed, as if there was nothing serious about him to take notice of. His absolutely unconcerned attitude went so far as to impel his panicky companion to make a rude gesture. Such behaviour of the dismayed companion drew only a genial smile from the Swami.

Another incident of a different nature has a peculiar significance, reminding one of Sri Ramakrishna's vision of Swami Saradananda's previous life as a companion (apostle) of Jesus. On his way to London from India, when he visited St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome, his mind was abruptly whisked off to a super-conscious plane, and he fell into a deep mystic trance (Samadhi). What he actually saw and felt at that time remained a closely guarded secret of his life. One may reasonably guess, however, that the holy Cathedral associated with the sacred memory of the apostles of Jesus stirred up a vivid recollection of his previous life as had been visualized by the Master, and drowned for the time being his consciousness of his immediate surroundings.

Swami Saradananda's spiritual eminence read through these significant incidents of his life was verified by a few hints given by him on some rare occasions. On the pages of his personal diary one finds repeated mention of his direct communion with the Divine Mother. Then his following explicit admission while dedicating his illuminating Bengali book *Bharate Shakti-Puja* (Worship of the Divine Mother in India) may be cited as another instance to the point: "The book is dedicated with great devotion to those by whose grace the author has been blessed with the realization of the Divine Mother in every woman on earth." This shows to what a peak of spiritual experience his mind had been lifted. Indeed, such a realization is the very goal of Mother Worship (Tantrika Sadhana). Incidentally it may be mentioned that Swami Saradananda went through a course of this kind of spiritual practice within about a couple of years after his return from the West. Later in life, in answer to the repeated and earnest queries of a monastic attendant regarding Swami Saradananda's spiritual attainment, a significant hint escaped unawares from the Swami's usually tight lips: "Nothing beyond my spiritual experience has been recorded in the book, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lila-prasanga."* And this book is replete with spiritual realizations of various kinds, including the highest one of transcendental oneness in Nirvikalpa Samadhi. This hint sums up the core of his inner life as that of a liberated soul—a seer of the ultimate verities of life and existence.

However, over and above all other activities of Swami Saradananda connected with the Math and the Mission as well as with the composition

and publication of his Master's biography, his primary concern appeared to be looking after the ease, convenience and health of the Holy Mother. He regarded her as the Divine Mother incarnate and placed himself completely at her service. Whether she stayed in her rural home at Jayramvati or in the city, the Swami was all attention to her. The Calcutta house was erected, as we have seen, mainly for facilitating her comfortable sojourn in the city. And for doing this as quickly as possible, he did not mind running into debt; nor did he mind undergoing strenuous labour for about nine years at a stretch in the production and publication of *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lila-prasanga* in order to clear off that debt. Indeed, his devotion to the Holy Mother cannot be fathomed. Seated in a small room downstairs in the Calcutta house, he would be found regulating the stream of her visitors exactly like her door keeper. Sometimes he would sportively introduce himself to strangers as the Mother's janitor. One could learn from his bearing that it was a glory and privilege to be allowed to serve the Holy Mother even in this way. Throughout her last stay in the Calcutta house during her fatal illness in 1920, with what anxious care the Swami would go into minute details regarding her medical treatment and nursing, sparing no pains, though in vain, for bringing her round!

Three years later in April 1923, the Swami had the satisfaction of perpetuating the sacred memory of the Holy Mother by getting a temple erected and dedicated to her in her native village Jayramvati. During the dedication ceremony, the benignant mood of the Holy Mother seemed to possess the Swami's mind as he went on like her, gracing with spiritual initiation all sorts of people who approached him on that occasion. One could feel the spiritual fervour radiated by the Swami on the festive days connected with the ceremony.

The dedication of the Holy Mother's temple was perhaps the final oblation offered by Swami Saradananda by way of completing his life-work, which was one long-continued sacrificial rite. After the successive exits of some of the stalwarts of the brotherhood, the passing away of the Holy Mother in July 1920, followed within two years by that of Swami Brahmananda, the first Abbot and inspired guide of the Order, shook even the unmoved Swami. These bereavements appeared to squeeze out the Swami's zest for work. That was why after seeing through the construction

and dedication of the Holy Mother's temple, the Swami practically detached himself from active work and went on spending long hours in meditation. He gave up writing and was never in a mood even to finish his *magnum opus, Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lila-prasanga.*

The only thing that concerned him at the moment was to instil into the junior members of the Order unflinching faith in the ideas and ideals left by its founder, Swami Vivekananda, and also to train up a batch of young monks for sharing the burden of piloting the organization that he had been carrying on his own shoulders. For this purpose, in 1926, he called a Convention of representatives from all Math and Mission centres; he surveyed before them, through his inaugural address, the origin and growth of the Ramakrishna movement that was careering at the time at top speed, cautioned them against the possible pitfalls on the path ahead and exhorted them emphatically to stand firmly by the ideals, so that they might march onward clearing all hurdles in the way. In the wake of this Convention, the Swami set up a Working Committee for advising the Secretary of the Math and the Mission on practically all administrative problems. As the remaining elders were about to disappear from the stage, it was in the fitness of things that a fresh batch of junior monks should be trained for stepping into their shoes. This device of the Working Committee inaugurated by Swami Saradananda served not only the purpose for the time being but also has proved to be a permanent and useful administrative link of the Math and Mission;

Thus enthusing the young members of the Order by holding aloft the ideas and ideals they were to strive after, and devising ways and means for realizing them in practice through successive generations, Swami Saradananda complacently laid down the charge entrusted to him some three decades back by his beloved leader Swami Vivekananda, and placidly entered Mahasamadhi on August 19, 1927.

An illumined soul, freed completely from all kinds of bondage, is not restricted by any prescribed code of life. Even the idea of duty ceases to have any meaning to him who has seen through the universe and realized the all-pervading Oneness as its essence. Yet such a liberated soul, when commissioned by the Divine Will to work for the uplift of humanity, does display distinctive traits of character befitting the role he is made to play.

Swami Saradananda's role was to demonstrate through his life the pattern of an ideal Karma-yogi. With perfect non-attachment and self-possession he would go on scrupulously discharging the duties before him, paying equal attention to the minor as to the major ones. Neither frown nor favour, nor any number of difficulties could swerve him from the straight and strict path.

Indeed, he held up the model of an ideal worker as desired by Swami Vivekananda. His rational mind, compassionate heart, pure and perfectly poised mind, indomitable energy and rare organizing ability combined to set up such a model. "Infinite patience, infinite purity, and infinite perseverance," as Swami Vivekananda wanted to see, were in his blood. The latter once remarked, "Sarat's blood is as cold as that of a fish, nothing can inflame it." His heart was "deep as the ocean, broad as the infinite sky," as Swami Vivekananda would have it. Swami Saradananda saw potential divinity even in the worst sinner, and tried to the last to work it up with extreme love and sympathy. Truculent and refractory persons thrown over by his colleagues found refuge under his benign care, and they naturally gathered round him. Indeed, he was a living illustration of the truth of Swami Vivekananda's assertion, "The man of renunciation sees all with an equal eye, and devotes himself to the service of all." Without any air of superiority, he treated all people alike with love and tenderness. He never cared for his personal ease and comfort. He would hardly accept any corporal service even from his own disciples. But he was ever ready to face any amount of hardship or even to hazard his life for helping others out of danger. While crossing a ravine on the Himalayas on his way to the Badrinarayan temple, he handed over his stick to one of the fellow pilgrims, an unknown old woman, without thinking for a moment what a risky adventure it would be for him to get over the steep hill-side without a staff in his hand for support. He would be found by the bed-side of patients suffering from contagious fatal diseases, whom their own kith and kin would not dare contact. His solacing words would give relief to many a person aching with mental agonies.

A distinctive mark of personality was stamped on his general demeanour. It was an object-lesson on decorum. Even those who were punctilious about etiquette would be captivated by his winning manners. The patience he

would usually exhibit while listening to and answering even silly questions from youngsters was surely marvellous. His sweet and soothing voice would often take the edge off any harsh word that he might have to utter by way of rebuking an offender. It would sound like a mother's appeal to her erring child. Yet this motherly voice was balanced by an awe-inspiring solemnity, and these combined effectively to produce the desired effect on the conscience of the guilty.

Swami Saradananda was an exemplar of methodical work. Slow, steady and regular in his movements, he would regard even a trifle with as much serious attention as it deserved. Any undertaking, big or small, was equally sacred to his thorough-going mind as an act of worship. Always cool in judgment, he was hardly found to rush to any decision on insufficient or unreliable data before him. He was perfectly rational, considerate and psychological in his methods while dealing with men and their affairs.

Lastly, love for orderliness was an innate virtue with him. Though quite simple in his requirements, he would scrupulously see that everything about him was kept neat and tidy. Possibly, this trait was reinforced by the example of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, who had been a past master in simplicity with orderliness.

From the above sketch one may get an idea of the part that the author of *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lila-prasanga,* Swami Saradananda, had to play as one of the prime organizers of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. It will ever remain a perfect model to be emulated by all who will seek personal salvation along with the well-being of the world as their aim of life.

SWAMI NIRVEDANANDA

GLOSSARY

Abhedananda. One of the monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, known as Kali during his early life.

Achintya-bhedabheda-vada. The philosophic doctrine of the Bengal Vaishnavas, which holds that the ultimate Truth is not pure sameness or non-duality but is difference in sameness, duality in non-duality, the apparent contradiction being explained away thus: that in the infinite, finite contradictions are no contradictions; but how it is so, would ever remain inconceivable to finite intellect or reason.

Adbhutananda (Latu). An illiterate monastic disciple of the Master noted for his single-minded devotion, austerity and tendency to meditation. His sparkling originality in answering questions on spirituality in general, and non-dual knowledge in particular, was a marvel of the spiritual world.

Adhikarika Purusha. A person commissioned by God to do good to the world; though liberated in life, he is born again and again with full memory of his previous lives, till he finishes that duty of his, when he merges for all times in Brahman (See IV. 3.29* and Vyasa's *Brahma Sutras* 3.3.32).

Adhyasa. False superimposition. Mistaking of Reality for that which does not exist. Take for example the rope-snake. When a rope is mistaken for a snake, the snake is said to be superimposed on the rope. (For details See: the introduction to Swami Vireswarananda's English translation of the *Brahma Sutras* together with the philosophical portions of Sankara's commentary).

Adhyatma-Ramayana. A book by Vyasa in which the story of Sri Rama's life is told with a great emphasis on the divine nature of the hero and on the Vedantic non-dualism.

Adiganga. A small river in the suburb of south Calcutta on which the well-known Kali temple of Kalighat stands. (Adi=original).

Advaita. Non-dual; a philosophical theory which advocates that in the Absolute or Brahman or Atman there is not the slightest touch of duality however attenuated.

* IV. 3.29—The first figure indicates the part of the book, the second figure indicates the chapter and the third one, the side-note.

Advaitananda. A monastic disciple of the Master, known as Gopal (Senior) during his pre-monastic days.

Agamacharya. A teacher of the Agamas or the Vedas.

***Agami* (Karma).** The action performed in this life which produces its result in a future life.

Agrahayana. The eighth month of the Bengali year.

Airavata. Name of the elephant of Indra, king of heaven. Once upon a time it arrogantly tried to check the onward rush of the Ganga but failed to withstand its current, which proved too powerful for it, and was carried away.

Aishwarya. Splendour, lordship, wealth.

Aitihya. Legendary tradition (illustrating some moral principles or ideals); regarded as one of the six Pramanas or proofs, which are Pratyaksha (sense perception), Anumana (inference), Upamana (analogy), Sabda (verbal authority), Anupalabdhi (non-perception; the non-perception of a jar, for example, proves its absence in a certain place), Arthapatti (postulation).

Ajna. See Centres.

Ajnana. See Avidya.

Alimpana. Ornamental drawing of liquid rice-paste on walls and floors or wood-planks during ceremonial occasions.

Anahata. See Centres.

Anahata Dhvani. Sound not produced by the contact of one thing with another (See II. 11.23).

Anganyasa. The touching of the heart, the head, the tuft of hair on the crest of the head, the arms, the eyes, and the palms accompanied with the uttering of proper Mantras; the idea being that those deities represented by the Mantras, are invoked to be present there in those parts of the body and purify them.

Anima etc. (the eight powers). (1) Anima (the power of becoming very small like an atom), (2) Laghima (that of becoming very light), (3) Prapti (that of obtaining anything at will), (4) Prakamya (that of irresistible will), (5) Mahima (that of increasing one's size and weight at will), (6)Ishitva (that of supremacy or lordship), (7) Vasitva (the power of keeping under control), and (8) Kamavasayita (the power of suppressing desires).

Anjali. A cavity formed by cupping the palms of both the hands joined together. Hence secondarily, such a cavityful of flowers, water, etc.

Annameru. A mountain of food—a big heap of food which is distributed amongst the needy as an act of piety.

Annapurna. The power of Brahman represented as distributing Anna or food. One of the presiding deities of Kasi.

Apara Vidya. All relative knowledge (See M*undaka Upanishad* 1. l. 4-5).

Apta. A man who has attained the absolute Truth.

Arati, Aratrika. The vespers, accompanied by the waving of lights.

Arghya. A respectful offering or oblation to gods or venerable persons consisting of rice, Durva grass, etc.

Arjuna. The great hero of the *Mahabharata,* friend and disciple of Sri Krishna.

Arthavada. Eulogy. A Vedic sentence recommending a precept by stating the good arising from its observance, and the evil from its non-observance and strengthening both the statements by adducing historical instances in support.

Arya. The so-called Hindus and their culture and civilization are called "Arya" in their ancient literature, religious or secular. The word is also used before the name of a person to whom respect is meant to be shown, implying that he lives up to the required standard.

Arya Samaj. It is a society claiming to be the real followers of the Vedas, founded by Swami Dayananda, a rare dynamic personality.

Asaucha. Defilement caused either by birth or death of a kinsman within certain degrees.

Ashada. The third month of the Bengali year.

Ashoka. A kind of large tree *(Saraca Indica* or *Jonesia Asoca).*

Asphanaka. A kind of Buddhist meditation.

Ashtavakra Samhita. A book on non-dualism of the extreme type, the expounder being the great sage Ashtavakra.

Aswin. The sixth month of the Bengali year.

Atke. The cooked food offered to Jagannath (the Lord of the World) at Puri kept dried to be taken by the devotees for the purification of the body and the mind whenever required. Also called Mahaprasad (the great Prasad).

Aul. A sect of the Vaishnavas.

Aum. Om. Otherwise called Pranava *;* it is a Mantra composed of the three letters A, U and M. It is the first manifested sound. All other Mantras and sounds are derived from it. *(Mandukya Upanishad* 1-12).

Avadhuta. A man who has attained divine knowledge and has renounced all worldly attachment and connection.

Avidya, Ajnana. Primal ignorance. It veils the true nature of Brahman and makes it appear as the universe and all the persons and things in it. It has for its support (Asraya) and also for its object (Vishaya) Self-Brahman. So it makes of It a Jiva who is ignorant and does not know the non-dual Self. This ignorance (Avidya, Ajnana) is beginningless but comes to an end when the knowledge of Self-Brahman is attained.

Avidya Maya. The power of Brahman leading man away from God. (Ibid. III. 3. 20 and See Vidya Maya).

Avidya Sakti. A woman who takes man away from religion. (See V. 7. 10 and See Vidya Sakti).

Awakening (Jagarana) of Devas and Devis. The Devas and Devis who are the particular cosmic aspects of the one universal consciousness, sleep or lie dormant in images; when they are properly worshipped and meditated on in the images with devotion, they get awakened and respond to people's prayers.

Ayan Ghosh. A cowherd of Vraja, described as the husband of Sri Radha in the books of the Vaishnavas of Bengal.

Ayodhya. The capital of Sri Ramachandra. The modern town on the bank of the river Sarayu.

Ayurveda. The science of medicine and surgery regarded as a supplement to the Atharvaveda. It has eight departments: (1) Salya (surgery), (2) Salakya (diagnosis of the disease of the head and organs attached thereto), (3) Kaya chikitsa (the treatment of the ailments of the whole body), (4) Bhuta Vidya (the treatment of mental disease supposed to be brought about

by evil spirits, psychologically known as spirit personalities), (5) Kaumarabhritya (the child treatment), (6) Agadatantra (the antidotes), (7) Rasayanatantra (alchemical treatment), and (8) Vajikaranatantra (treatment for increasing generative power).

Babu. The word is used at the end of the name of a gentleman like the word Mr., which is prefixed to the names. When it is used without a name it is meant to show respect to the person for whom it is used. **Badsha, A Muslim emperor**.

Bagdi. One of the so-called low castes of the society of Bengal; its members were noted for the valour and power of endurance; they proved to be good soldiers when Bengal was independent; later, losing that opportunity of showing their talent, many of their descendants turned highwaymen.

Balaram Babu. Balaram Basu, a householder devotee of Sri Ramakrishna.
Baul. A sect of the Vaishnavas, its followers appearing outwardly as mad (Baul=Batula=mad).

B.E. The Bengali Era, When 593 years 3 months and 14 days are added to it, it roughly corresponds to the Christian era. **"Be a rat again".** See Punarmushikobhava.

Belur Math. The monastery at Belur on the bank of the Ganges, five miles up from Howrah. The Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

Bhadra. The fifth month of the Bengali year.

Bhagavan. The Lord of the universe who possesses the six Bhagas, naturally and absolutely, the Bhagas being lordliness, moral excellences, fame, splendour, dispassion and knowledge. Or Bhagavan is one who is thoroughly conversant with the origin and destruction of all creatures, their prosperity and adversity, their knowledge and ignorance truly and fully. Hence, secondarily, persons of great eminence.

Bhagavata. It is a Pauranic devotional book much read in this country. It illustrates the truth of the Vedanta by means of stories. A part of it describes the life of Sri Krishna, which has made it an authoritative book of the Vaishnavas.

Bhagiratha. An ancient king of the Solar race to which Sri Ramachandra belonged.

Bhagirathi. Another name of the river Ganges, so called because she was brought from heaven on to earth by Bhagiratha, king of the Solar race. **Bhairava.** The word has three meanings : (1) a god (deity) of that name, (2) a person belonging to a particular community, and (3) one of the six Ragas. See Ragas and Raginis.

Bhairavi. A woman belonging to a particular Sakta religious community. (2) A particular class of goddesses (female deities). (3) One of the Raginis.

Bharata. The king of ancient India, It is after his name that this country is known as Bharatavarsha. There was another king of the same name who had to be born as a deer as he loved and too constantly thought of a deer in his lifetime and again as an anchorite who remembered his previous births with their follies and who, therefore, outwardly appeared as inert because he would not engage himself in any kind of activity.

Bharat, Bharatavarsha. The ancient name of the country known as India in the English atlas. By Bharat was meant the two countries of India and Pakistan into which the country was partitioned on August 15, 1947.

Bhattacharya. It is a surname added to the names of some Brahmins. Bhatta=a title of the learned Brahmins; Acharya=Guru or preceptor or teacher.

Bhavas. Devotional moods, spiritual ideas; the word has various meanings.

Bhavabhuti. A Sanskrit poet; the author of the well-known drama *Uttara*

Ramacharita, noted for its sublime theme and treatment.

Bhavamukha. Bhava means a being, an idea, and Mukha the source. The word means the source of all beings and thoughts, and ideas. (See III. 3. 11-15).

Bhavasamadhi, Savikalpa Samadhi. When one is conscious of one mental modification only, namely, "I am a part of God", "a mother of God", etc., one is said to be in Bhavasamadhi. (See III. 2. 7 and II. 13. 5-10 and II. 1.11).

Bhek. The religious garb of a Vaishnava mendicant.

Bhiksha. Bhiksha is whatever physical necessities one gets by begging but without the accompanying stricture. (See *Gita* 4. 22 and 9. 22).
Bhikshamata. The first lady from whom a boy, at the time of his investiture with the sacred thread, receives foodgrains according to traditional injunctions.

Bhringi. An attendant of Siva.

Bhuh. The earth.

Bodhana. The ceremony of awakening the Goddess Durga in the evening before Her annual worship on the seventh day of the bright fortnight of the month of Aswin. (See awakening and the months of the Bengali year).

Brahma, Vishnu, Maheshvara. Mythologically, Brahman as the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe is respectively called, Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshvara. Philosophically he is the first born Jiva, who identifies himself with the aggregate of the subtle bodies of the universe; he is the creator of the gross universe.

Brahmacharin. A student serving his Guru or preceptor and observing the vow of continence and hardship.

Brahma-muhurta. The last part of the night.

Brahman. The all-pervading principle, the Self of all beings, the Reality which is one only without a second and besides whom there really exists nothing else. (See for Its definition *Taittiriya Upanishad* 2. 1 and the commentary of Sankara on it).

Brahmani. (1) A woman belonging to the Brahmin caste, (2) Sri Ramakrishna's Guru (Bhairavi) with whose help he practised Tantric disciplines.

Brahma-Sakti. The power of Brahman; Brahman as creating, preserving and destroying the universe. (See *Svetasvatara Upanishad* 1.1.2 and 6, 8; *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* 2. 5. 19 and *Gita* 7.12-14). **Brahma-vari.** Brahman as holy water. The holy water of the Ganges was called so by Sri Ramakrishna.

Brahmo. A member of the Brahmo Samaj.

Brahmo Samaj. The monotheistic society founded by Raja Rammohan Roy and organized by Maharshi Devendranath Thakur (Tagore). Brahmananda Kesavchandra Sen seceded from it and started another, which in its turn got split and a third came into existence called the General Brahmo Samaj of India, Kesav's being known afterwards as the New Dispensation.

Buddha. Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism.

Buddhacharita. *A* drama on Buddha's life (by the great poet Girishchandra Ghosh, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna) based on Ashvaghosha's book of the same name and its English translation by Edwin Arnold.

Buddhagaya. It is the place, in the province of Bihar, where Buddha realized the supreme knowledge.

"Bundling of rice and plantain". Brahmins depend for their maintenance on whatever they earn by officiating in the sacrifices of others. They get as their fee, rice, plantain and other food articles and clothes etc., that are

offered to the gods and the manes. Hence, "Bundling of rice and plantain" is contemptuously used for a bread-earning profession.

Centres (six). Ida, Pingala, Sushumna and other Nadis, Chakras or Padmas (lotuses), talked of in the Yoga-sastras. They are the very subtle paths for Prana or the vital force to travel. Chakras or lotuses are the centres governing, through grosser and grosser plexuses, ganglia nerves, arteries, etc., particular regions of the human body and mind and their functions. Although most of them have their physical counterparts in the gross human body, the correspondence should be taken as rough and tentative.

Ida and Pingala are associated with the left and right sympathetic cords respectively on each side of the Sushumna, which is in the central canal of the spinal column. The so-called lotuses are all stipulate within the Sushumna, pierced through by a subtler Nadi named Citrini. These Chakras are the centres of the manifestation of the Prana-sakti, their objective manifestations being the plexuses and ganglia and lobes found on those regions of the vertebral column and the brain. In this sense alone their locations should be sought as follows : (1) The Muladhara Chakra is in the region midway between the anus and the genitals;(2) Swadhishthana, at the root of the genitals, (3) Manipura, in the spinal centre opposite the navel, (4) Anahata, opposite the heart, (5) Visuddha, at the back of the throat in the spinal column, (6) Ajna, frontally between the eye-brows; from the back side it corresponds with the pineal gland, the pituitary body and the top of the cerebellum, (7) Sahasrara, corresponds with the upper cerebrum. These centres are associated with Vrittis or moral and immoral qualities; those of Swadhishthana and Manipura being all bad, those of Anahata mixed, and those of the higher ones being all good.

In the Sahasrara is the eternal abode of Siva or pure consciousness; in the lowest centre lies the Kundalini or the same consciousness manifested as individual Prana Sakti and the ideal is to take the manifested, limited and veiled consciousness and power back to its unmanifest,—unlimited pristine effulgence of pure consciousness in the Sahasrara, mergence of apparent Jiva into the real eternal Siva through the gradual falling off of veils and limitations as the Kundalini rises to higher and higher centres.

Chacchadi. A mixed Bengali dish or curry consisting of many vegetables not too dried nor too watery and generally a little too hot.

Chakra. (1) A circle of devotees, (2) one of the six centres in the Canal Centralis.

Chamara. Bushy tail of the Chamari or the yak *(Bos Grunniens)* used as a fan.

Chandala. One belonging to the lowest stratum of the Hindu society.

Chapati. A kind of thin bread or cake of flour.

Chatushpathi. Same as Tol (Sanskrit school).

Chosen Ideal. Any one of God's divine forms chosen by a Sadhaka or by his Guru for him. The Sadhaka continually repeats the name of and meditates on the form of that Deity and thereby ultimately has the great realization (of God), the ultimate truth.

Dakshina Kali. The benign aspect of Kali the Mother, the power of Brahman—Brahman Itself as creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe. As the Genetrix and nourisher of the world, She is the Mother of all. She has a four-armed form with sword and a severed head in the left hands and boon and freedom from fear in the two right hands.

Dakshineswar. The village on the bank of the Ganges five miles north of Calcutta where Sri Ramakrishna lived for many years in a room in the temple premises of Rani Rasmani.

Dal. Pulses.

Danta. The long stick-like kitchen vegetable.

Dandi. A Sannyasin who carries a staff in his hand throughout his monastic life.

Darsana. Literally, those that help us in seeing God. Philosophical systems. There are six orthodox schools of Indian philosophy, namely, Nyaya, Vaiseshika, Sankhya, Patanjala, Mimamsa or Purva Mimamsa and Vedanta or Uttara Mimamsa.

Darves. (1) A sect of Vaishnava devotees.
(2) A Mohammedan devotee.

Dasaratha and Dasarathi. Dasaratha is Sri Ramachandra's father. Dasarathi is (1) Sri Ramachandra, (2) a Bengali composer of some devotional songs addressed to the Mother.

Dasa or Dasya Bhakti. See five moods (Panchabhava).

Dayananda (Swami). The founder of the Arya Samaj.

Dengodanta. A kitchen vegetable *(Amaranthus Lividus).*

Destroyer of Tripura. Siva, who destroys by His grace, the three states of relative consciousness, viz., the wakeful, the dreaming and the deep sleep states. He is so called also because he killed, according to the Puranas, the demon named Tripura.

Devasura fight. According to the Puranas it is a fight between the gods and the demons, their enemies. It means a struggle for supremacy between two classes of the senses of men—(1) The senses under moral training moving in accordance with the scriptures and (2) the senses prompted by the natural urges (Asuras).

Deva, Devata, Devi. Literally, shining one. The word sometimes means Brahman and sometimes Its divine forms, both male and female. Deva=male deity, Devata=both male and female deity, Devi=(l) female deity, (2) the power of Brahman or Brahman Itself when It appears to create, preserve and destroy the universe, (3) a lady is also so called when respect is meant, as she is regarded an earthly representative of the divine Mother.

Dharma Chakra. The wheel of Dharma set in motion by Gautama Buddha.

Dharapat. A table-book dealing with measurement of land, money etc., by Subhankara.

Dhoti. The wearing-cloth of a man.

Dhruva. The boy-devotee mentioned in the *Bhagavata.*

Dhuni. Sacred fire lighted by holy men.

Dipavali or Dewali. Literally a series of lamps. A religious festival that takes place in the month of Kartik when there is illumination. **Divyabhava.** Intensified state of the mood of the spiritual teacher. (See IV. 4. 59.)

Divyachara. The Tantric rites and ceremonies of the highest order meant for people who have got, or are about to get, the divine outlook on life and everything around them; the two other modes are the Virachara (the heroic) and the Pasvachara (the animal).

Dol-yatra. The swinging festival of Sri Krishna. It comes once annually on the full moon day of the month of Chaitra. It is the birthday of Sri Chaitanya of Bengal.

Durga. The power of Brahman. Literally the incomprehensible One. In Her ten-armed form She is worshipped annually in the bright fortnight of the lunar month of Aswin.

Durga Puja. Worship of Durga.

Durvagrass. *Panucum dactylan.*

Eight miraculous powers (vide Anima etc.)

Eternal Religion. Sanatana Dharma the religion of the Vedas. The religion of the Hindus is referred to in the scriptures by that name.**F. A.** Examination. The first examination in arts in the Indian universities after the Entrance or the Matriculation.

Fakir. A Hindu or a Mohammedan religious mendicant.

Family Deity. Some aspect of Brahman in the form of a Devata worshipped by a family generation after generation.

Farewell gift. Pandits or devotees are invited on ceremonial occasions.

They are presented with money, cloth, and other things by the host when he bids good-bye to them. **"Father" (Baba).** This word is used in this book to show how Mathur Babu and all the members of his family addressed Sri Ramakrishna. The Vaishnava man of renunciation is also called "father".

Five moods (Panchabhava). The devotional moods (1) of calmness (Santa), (2) of a servant of God (Dasya), (3) of a friend of His (Sakhya), (4) of a mother or father of the Lord (Vatsalya) and (5) of a wife or sweetheart of God (Madhura). (II. 13. 5.30.) To these may be added a sixth, namely, the attitude of a son or a daughter (Apatya).

Forms of God. Everything in the universe is a form of God: Kali, Durga, Siva, Vishnu and others are called divine forms.

Four fruits. The four ends of human life, namely, moral excellence (Dharma), money (Artha), enjoyments (Kama) and freedom from all bondages (Moksha).

Fourteen regions. The fourteen spheres, namely, the seven heavens and seven nether worlds.

Fourth state (the Turiya). Superconscious state. It is called the fourth in relation to the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep just as when a rope is mistaken for the three things, namely, a stick, a snake and a garland, the rope, their substratum, may be called the fourth.

Frog in the well. One who knows his own neighbourhood only and has no experience of the world at large; narrow-minded people.

Gadadhar, Gadai. The name given to Sri Ramakrishna by his father, who had a dream in Gaya that Vishnu, Gadadhar Himself (the wielder of mace), would be born of him. (Vide I. 3. 21).

Gajana. A festival held in honour of Siva in the month of Chaitra.

Ganda. Four Cowries make one Ganda; and five Gandas make one pice, $^{1}/_{64}$ th of a rupee.

Ganesa, Ganapati. The spiritual son of Siva and Parvati.

Ganga. A river in India rising in the Himalayas and flowing into the Bay of Bengal and held by the entire Hindu world as sacred as sacred as the Jordan is to the Christian. Its English name is the Ganges.

Gangasagar. The mouth of the river Ganga in the Bay of Bengal.

G**aruda.** The king of birds, a bitter enemy of serpents. His parents were Kasyapa and Vinata.

Gauranga, Gaur or Gora. Sri Krishna Chaitanya is called so. It refers to the fair complexion of his body.

Gaya. It is a town in Bihar; a station of the Eastern Railway. It is a place of pilgrimage, its presiding deity being Gadadhar or Vishnu.

Gayatri. A very well-known sacred Vedic Mantra, repeated during morning, midday and evening prayers, (cf. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* 6, 14. 1-8).

Ghagra. A skirt with many longitudinal folds.

Ghasphul. A kind of flower growing on some very small grass.

Ghatapratishtha. The installation of a jar during worship.

Ghee. Butter boiled over fire.

Girish, Girishchandra. A noted Bengali dramatist. A devotee of Sri Ramakrishna who highly praised his faith and predicted his future spiritual attainments which came true.

Gita, Bhagavad. It is a part of the Bhishma Parva of the *Mahabharata* by Vyasa. It is a conversation between Sri Krishna and Arjuna in the battlefield of Kurukshetra, teaching Arjuna the knowledge of the Self and the secret of work based on that knowledge.

Goloka. The eternal abode of Vishnu.

Gopala. Krishna, the cowherd boy.

Gopala's mother. A woman devotee of Sri Ramakrishna (Vide IV.6 & 7).

Gopis. Literally cowherd women, especially those who sported with the Lord in His incarnation as Krishna.

Gosain. Goswami, a respectable Vaishnava householder Guru.

Gotra. A family or a race or a lineage traced to a sage of note.

Govinda. Name of Vishnu, Sri Krishna.

Gunas (three). Gunas are the three essences of Maya or Prakriti, the power of Brahman. They are not separable from one another and are always changing. Everything of the universe consists of Gunas — Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. (Vide *Gita* 7. 13 and 14. 5-20).

> The word Guna means a quality. It depends for its existence on its substratum (Guni). So, these essences of Prakriti, though not the qualities of anything, are called Gunas, inasmuch as they depend for their apparent existence on Self-Brahman the only Reality, just as a rope-snake which has no real existence, depends, for its apparent existence, on the rope, its real substratum. Guna also means a rope. Hence Guna means figuratively that which binds people to transmigration, even as a rope binds animals to posts, trees, etc.

Guru. The spiritual teacher (Vide III. 3. 21).

Gurubhava. The power or the mood of the spiritual teacher (Vide III. 3. 21).

Gurugita. A book describing the glory of the Guru or spiritual teacher.

Halwa. A preparation of coarse flour of wheat, sugar, Ghee and milk or water.

Hanuman. The well-known devotee of Sri Ramachandra.

Hara. Another name of Siva.

Hari. (1) A name of God, (2) the pre-monastic name of Swami Turiyananda, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna.

Harisabha. Religious congregations of the Vaishnavas where people listen to the reading of scriptures.

Haritaki. The yellow myrobalan tree or fruit.

Hathayoga. A difficult mode of practising Yoga (meditation). Ha=the moon or the Ida; Tha=the sun or the Pingala. Hence Hathayoga=the Yoga by means of which the current of Prana flowing through Ida and Pingala is forcibly stopped and is made to pass through Sushumna. (Vide I. 8. 11 and III. 1. 15).

Havishyanna. Sacred food, Ghee, milk, rice, sesame, barley etc.

"Head and tail". The unnecessary parts of anything; the metaphor being taken from fish whose fleshy portion lies between the head and the tail, which are consequently of no use.

Hemanta. One of the six seasons of the year. The months of Kartik and Agrahayan.

Hindola (spring). Seasonal Raga (melodic structure).

Hladini (Sakti). The bliss-giving power of Brahman. (See *Vishnupurana* 1.12.69).

Holy Mother. The holy spouse of Sri Ramakrishna.

Homa. A mythological bird.

Hriday, Hriide, Hriidu, Hriidayram Mukhopadhyaya. Nephew of Sri Ramakrishna.

Humour of wind. The human body is composed of the five elements of which the Ayurveda does not take account of Akasa, or the continuum interpenetrating everything else, nor the Prithivi, the solid. Of the other three, Vata or Vayu is not this air, but the menstruum in and by which it is held together in the body; it is expressed as various forces, such as the nerve force, the electro-motor, the molecular force; in fact it is the moving power in the body. Agni is known as Pitta (literally bile) whose function is metabolism and consequent-production of bodily heat, including acids. Apa is called Kapha (literally phlegm) the principle of moisture. So, Vayu, Pitta and Kapha are the principles of activity, heat and moisture respectively in the body, ordinarily, as in this book, translated as the humour or fluid of wind, bile and phlegm.

Indra. The king of gods.

Isvara. Brahman with attributes. Philosophically Brahman Itself working through Maya with Sattva prevalent.

Isvarakoti and incarnations of God. (Vide IV. 3. 28, 29; also III. 2. 3).

Ista. A divine form of Brahman, (vide Chosen Ideal)

Itihasa. History (legendary or traditional).

Jadasamadhi. Absolute concentration of mind having no content.

Jaina. The religion generally regarded as founded by Mahavira, a contemporary of Gautama Buddha.

Jagannatha. The image installed in the famous temple at Puri. It is said that within the image are kept the bones of Sri Krishna's body, which fact accounts for the especial attraction of Sri Chaitanya. Literally, the Lord of the world.

Jyaishtha. The second month of the Bengali year.

Janaka. The king of ancient Videha; the father of Sita.

Janaki. Sita, the daughter of Janaka.

Janmashtami. The eighth day of the black fortnight of the lunar month of Sravan, the birthday of Sri Krishna.

Japa. Continuous repetition of a Mantra with the mind concentrated on its meaning, sometimes with a form.

Jatismara. One who remembers his past lives.

Jayramvati. The name of the village (in the district of Bankura, West Bengal) where the Holy Mother was born.

Jhulan. The swinging festival of Sri Krishna.

Jilapi. A kind of sweet.

Jiva. A mortal. Philosophically Brahman Itself under the influence of Maya with Rajas and Tamas prevalent. (See Isvara).

Jivakoti. (Vide IV. 3.28, 29 and IV. 2. 3).

Jivatma. The self as the Jiva.

Juncture worship. A special worship of Mother Durga at the juncture of the eighth and the ninth lunation of the bright fortnight in the lunar month

of Aswin. The time of juncture is regarded as very auspicious.

Kaikeyi. A wife of Dasaratha, the king of ancient Ayodhya. She gained notoriety by being instrumental in banishing Rama to forest for fourteen years.

Kaivarta. Fisherman. Rani Rasmani belonged to this caste.

Kali, Kalika. The power of Brahman who has become the three Gunas. She is the one who creates, preserves and destroys the universe. She was the chosen Ideal of Sri Ramakrishna.

Kalighat. In south Calcutta where there is a famous temple of Kali.
Kaliyuga. The iron age, the fourth age of the world, the present age. It commenced with the passing away of Sri Krishna about 5000 years ago.

Kalki. The last of the ten incarnations of God, who, it is said, will come at the end of Kaliyuga and destroy the wicked.

Kamakhyapitha. The holy place near Gauhati in Assam where the presiding deity is Mother Kamakhya, where one of the 51 parts of the body of Sati (Siva's consort) fell; hence an important holy place for the followers of Tantra.

Kamalakanta. A famous poet and devotee of Bengal, especially famous for popular devotional songs addressed to Kali, the universal Mother.

Kamandalu. A water-pot especially used by ascetics.

Kamarini. A blacksmith woman.

Kamarpukur. The village in the district of Hooghly in West Bengal where Sri Ramakrishna was born.

Kamsa. The maternal uncle of Sri Krishna who was killed by the latter for his tyranny.

Kanai. A name of Sri Krishna.

Kanyakubja. The part of the country now called Kanauj in U.P.

Kapalika. A sect of Tantrics, believed to be notorious for their revolting religious practices. They are found both among the Buddhists and the Hindus.

Kapila. The author of the Sankhya philosophy.

Karanyasa. Special gesticulations of the hands during worship.

Karma Yoga. The Yoga of action, through which man seeks union with God by the performance of selfless actions, which together with their fruits, are dedicated to the Lord.

Karnataka. A kind of music pertaining to South India.

Kartabhaja. A sect of the Vaishnavas with esoteric practices.

Kartika. (1) The spiritual son of Siva and Parvati, (2) the seventh month of the Bengali calendar.

Kasi, Kasidham, Varanasi, Banaras (Benares). The famous holy place of India in Uttar Pradesh. The presiding deities here are Sri Viswanath (the Lord of the universe) and Annapurna, His power.

Kasikhanda. A Puranic book describing the glory of Kasi.

Katha. One-sixtieth part of an acre.

Kathaka. A person who reads religious books for people and explains them.

Katyayani. The goddess in Vrindavan who was worshipped by the Gopis, to get from her the boon of getting Krishna as their sweetheart.

Kaula. Derived from the word Kula. A perfected man according to the Tantras.

Kaupina. A small piece of cloth worn generally by monks around the loin.

Kausalya. The mother of Sri Ramachandra.

Kavirdas. A holy man and poet of Northern India of the Middle Ages, noted for his liberal unorthodox views on religion and society.

Kayastha. A caste in Hindu society, generally found in Northern India; one of the three intellectual castes of North India, the other two being Brahmins and Vaisyas. Kayet is the slang for Kayastha.

Kazi. A Muslim judge during the Pathan and the Mughal rule in India.

Khol. An earthen drum, both sides of which are played by the hands during singing the name and glory of the Lord in a peculiar kind of tune noted for its high spiritual pathos.

Kinnara. A heavenly singer and dancer.

Kojagari (Kojagari Lakshmi). The full moon night of the month of Aswin when vigil is kept throughout the night with an anxious expectation of meeting Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, who is supposed to call out, for showing her favour to one who keeps vigil with the words, "Ko jagrati (who is awake)?" from which comes the word Kojagari.

Koran. The holy book of Islam.

Krishna. An incarnation of God of that name, the friend and teacher of Arjuna of the Mahabharata.

Krishna Chaitanya. The monastic name of Sri Gauranga or Nimai.

Kshatriya. The warrior class.

Kundalini. The coiled power. (Vide III. 2. 28-233; See also centres).

Kurma. A tortoise. In the Puranas it is said that God assumed the form of a tortoise and held the world on Its back during the dissolution of the

universe.

Kurukshetra. The place near Delhi where the famous battle described in the Mahabharata was fought.

Kusilava. Kusa and Lava, the twin sons of Sri Ramachandra.

Laddu. A kind of sweetmeat made of Ghee, sugar and powdered pulse.

Lakshmana. Brother of Sri Ramachandra.

Lakshmi. (1) The goddess of wealth. (2) It is the name of Sri Ramakrishna's niece.

Lanka. Ceylon according to Indian tradition.

Letti. A kind of flour preparation.

Lila. Divine play or sport.

Lilaprasanga. The Bengali book called *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lilaprasanga* of which this book is a translation.

Luchi. A thin cake of flour fried in Ghee.

Madhurabhava. See the five moods.

Mahabharata. The great Hindu epic of that name.

Mahamahopadhyaya. A title given to a person very proficient in Sanskrit literature, philosophy, etc.

Mahamaya. The divine Mother, the divine will.

Maharshi. A great sage.

Mahavakya. A great Vedantic saying stating the oneness of the individual self and Brahman.

Mahavidyas. They are ten in number. (1) Kali; (2) Tara, (3) Shodasi, (4) Bhuvaneswari, (5) Bhairavi, (6) Chinnamasta, (7) Dhumavati, (8) Vagala, (9) Matangi and (10) Kamala; worshipped and pleased, they are all givers of the knowledge of Brahman.

Mahavira. (1) The Jain saint of that name and (2) a name of Hanuman.

Maheswara. The great Lord, a name of Siva.

Mallar. A seasonal Raga (melodic structure) sung in the rainy season.

Mandakini. The Ganga in heaven.

"Mansion". It is the name of the building near the Kali temple at Dakshineswar where the proprietors of the temple lived when they visited it.

Mantra. A formula sacred to a deity, by the loving and reverent repetition of which the deity is realized.

Master (The). Sri Ramakrishna.

Math. A monastery.

Mathur. Mathuranath, Mathuramohan. A devotee of the Master, son-in-law of Rani Rasmani.

Mathura. A place of pilgrimage where Sri Krishna was born. It is a district town of Uttar Pradesh.

Mathur. The songs indicating the pangs of separation the Gopis felt when Krishna went away to Mathura. **Maund.** A weight of 82 lbs. or 40 seers.

Maya, Avidya, Prakriti (according to the Vedanta), Sakti. The power of Brahman. It is recorded as neither real nor unreal nor both. It consists of the three Gunas (See Gunas). It is the same as Avidya (See Avidya). The only difference between them is that in Maya, the Guna called Sattva predominates and in Avidya, Rajas and Tamas preponderate. The pure

Existence-Knowledge- Bliss as reflected in Maya is the all-knowing and all-powerful Isvara (Vide IV. 4. 16) and as reflected in Avidya, it is the little-knowing Jiva of small powers. The whole universe is a transformation of Maya (Vide *Gita* 7. 14). Brahman is Being, Maya or Avidya is the Becoming, neither real, nor illusory. Just as the earthen pot, remaining all the while nothing but earth, gets a temporary name, form and usage shifting from moment to moment or the false appearance of a snake in a piece of rope remaining the same unchanged rope all the while gets a name, form and action, all false and fleeting; so the Brahman, the pure Being-Consciousness-Bliss, remaining from eternity to eternity the same unchanged and unchangeable substratum, appears as the fleeting universe of matter and mind, of name, form and usage or action of ever-changing facts and acts. Hence it is a "mere statement of fact" and acts without having any substance by themselves as such but with having a real substance in the Being, which lends a sort of shadowy quasi-existence to them.

Months of the Bengali year. (1) Vaisakh, (2) Jyaishtha, (3) Ashadh, (4) Sravan, (5) Bhadra, (6) Aswin, (7) Kartik, (8) Agrahayan, (9) Paushh, (10) Magh, (11) Phalgun and (12) Chaitra. Vaisakh, the first month begins in the middle of April.

Mother of the Universe. Brahman is so called because It is the Genetrix of the universe. One, who knows God as one's mother, loves Him most dearly.

Mridanga. A drum, whose main body is of earthenware, covered all over with leather-straps, the right and left openings covered with hides and played upon with the hands; much used in Sankirtan or singing of Lord's name and glory.

Muladhara. The basic centre (See Centres).

Muni. A great thinker on God, generally an ascetic.

Munsiff. A subordinate judicial officer.

Naga. A sect of naked Sannyasins.

Nagakesara. A flower.

Nahavat (khana). A music room. In short, "nahavat-khana' is referred to as **"Nahavat'.**

Namaz. Islamic prayer.

Nanda festival. A festival held at Sri Krishna's birthday at Vraja, by the people of Vraja, whose chief was Nanda, the foster father of Sri Krishna.

Nandi. An attendant of Siva.

Narayana. A name of God, the inner controller of all beings.

Narendar. Sri Ramakrishna used to call Narendra thus.

Neti-dhauti. (Vide IV. 1. 11, footnote).

Neti, neti. See "Not this, not this''.

Nilachala. Puri in Orissa.

Niranjan. A monastic disciple of Sri Ramakrishna.

Nirvikalpa Samadhi. The mental modification "I am Brahman'', when one is not conscious of it nor of any mental modification. (Vide II. 1.5-11; also *Gita* 6. 10-32).

Nitai. Nityananda, the principal companion of Sri Chaitanya.

Nityananda. Vide Nitai. **"Not this, not this".** These words from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (2. 3. 6) negate the whole universe superimposed on Brahman and immediately prove that It alone exists and nothing else. (Vide *Mandukya Upanishad* 7 and Sankaracharya's commentary on it).

Nyasa. Assignment to deities of different parts of the body with gesticulations and uttering of Mantras.

Nyayachancu. A title given to a person highly learned in the Nyaya philosophy.

Om. See Aum.

Padmasana. A particular cross-legged sitting posture in religious meditation.

Pakhoaj. A sort of double drum.

Panchavati. A cluster of five trees. (Vide II. 8. 10 foot-note).

Paramahamsa. A man who has the knowledge of Brahman and has renounced the world.

Parasara. The father of Vyasa.

Para Vidya. The knowledge of Brahman. (See Aparavidya).

Patal. (1) A kitchen vegetable, (2) a chapter.

Paush. The ninth month of the Bengali year.

Phalaharini. Sri Kali, worshipped in the month of Jyaishtha with special offerings of all kinds of fruit; hence the name phala (fruit), harini (gatherer) or eater. Philosophically, one who destroys the effects of past deeds of the worshippers.

Phalgu. A river near Gaya in Bihar.

Phalgun. The eleventh month of the Bengali year.

Pice. A coin, one sixty-fourth of a rupee.

Pie. A coin, one twelfth of one anna, which is one sixteenth of a rupee.

Pinda. A ball of rice or powdered wheat offered to the deceased forefathers.

Pithasthanas. There are fifty-one in all. Each of them contains a part of the body of Sati, Siva's consort.

Pitris. Forefathers, manes.

Prakriti. According to the Sankhya philosophy, the one nonconscious origin of the universe consisting of the three Gunas. It has no power of independent action. It acts in the presence of Purusha only.

Prakritilina. (Vide I. Introduction 3 and IV. 3. 28).

Pranava. The syllable Aum. (Vide II. 11. 23).

Pranayama. Restraining the breath and at the same time repeating the name or attributes of a deity.

Prasada. Food offered to deities.

Prayaga. The confluence of the three rivers, the Ganga, the Yamuna and the Saraswati near Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh.

Prayopavesana. Lying before the image of a deity without taking food or drink with a view to having a boon.

Premananda. A monastic disciple of Sri Ramakrishna.

Punarmushiko bhava. Once a holy man saw a mouse sinking in the river near his hermitage. He saved its life and kept it in his hut. Seeing it successively pounced upon by a cat, a dog and a tiger, it was ultimately raised to a tiger, when one day it attempted to spring upon him. "O ingratitude, be the mouse again", saying so the holy man sprinkled a little water on it and it was re-converted into the same mouse. The proverb simply means "going back to one's former condition". **Puranas.** The eighteen sacred works by Vyasa containing the whole of the Hindu mythology.

Puranic age. When Puranas were written; generally ascribed to the period when Buddhism declined or according to some, during the hey-day of Buddhism.

Purascharana. Performance of the prescribed number of Japa of the name of Devas and Devis and offering of oblations, etc.

Purnahuti. The final oblation.

Purnabhisheka. Full initiation into Tantric rites.

Purushas. According to the Sankhya they are the many souls consisting of pure consciousness. They are non-doers and witnesses of the changes of Prakriti. According to the Vedanta, Purusha is one and not many and means Brahman.

Radha, Radhika, Radharani, Rai, Srimati. An incarnation of the divine power of bliss having pure Sattva for the material of her person.

Raga. Melody type, melody structure, the basis of Indian melody.

Raghuvira. Ramachandra the hero of the Raghus. The family deity of Sri Ramakrishna.

Ragini. Female Raga. According to classification each of the six Ragas (males) have six Raginis (females). Thus Bhairava, for example, is a Raga and Bhairavi a Ragini. They are secondary Ragas grouped with primary ones to denote affinity.

Rahu. Mythologically, a demon who disguising himself as a god, sat among the gods and partook of nectar churned out of the ocean by the gods and demons. When the fraud was detected, his head was cut off by Vishnu. But as he had drunk a little of nectar, which went up to the throat, that portion of his body became immortal. He thenceforward wreaked vengence on the sun and the moon, who detected him while he was partaking of nectar. Hence he swallows the sun and the moon periodically, which is known as the eclipses.

After some time, they get out of the throat. Astronomically, it is the shadows of the moon and the earth coming between the other two.

Rai. The same as Radha.

Raja. Literally a king.

Rajas. The Guna of that name. (See Gunas)

Rajasika. Pertaining to Rajas, one of the three essences of Prakriti. (See Gunas)

Raja Yoga. Process of reaching out to truth through deep concentration of mind. The famous *Yoga Aphorisms* of Patanjali deals with it.

Rakhal. A monastic disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, regarded as his spiritual child. He was known as Swami Brahmananda during his monastic life. The first President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission with its headquarters at the village of Belur on the Hooghly river opposite to Calcutta.

Rakshasas. The inhabitants of Lanka, the kingdom of Ravana who was killed by Sri Ramachandra.

Rakshasa-gana. All men and women are divided, according to their inner nature, into the three groups, namely, Deva-gana, Nara-gana and Rakshasa-gana, the divine, the human and the demoniac, respectively. A woman of the last group is believed to become a widow soon after marriage, if married to a man of the second group.

Raktabija. The demon killed by Goddess Durga. Another demon like himself was born from each drop of blood that fell to the ground during his battle with Her.

Rama, Ramachandra. The King of ancient Ayodhya; an incarnation of God; the hero of the epic *Ramayana.*

Ramayana. The famous epic describing the life of Sri Ramachandra.

Ram, Ramchandra Datta, Ram Babu. A householder devotee of Sri Ramakrishna.

Ramlal, Ramlal Chattopadhyaya. Nephew of Sri Ramakrishna. **Ramprasad.** The famous saint of Bengal, a devotee of Kali, who composed many devotional songs which have since become a perennial source of inspiration to devotees.

Rang. It is a Mantra, the name of fire.

Rani. Literally a queen.

Rasa. The dance of the Gopis of Vrindavan with Sri Krishna.

Rasagolla. A kind of sweetmeat, spongy ball full of juice.

Rasmani (the Rani). The foundress of the Kali temple at Dakshineswar.

Rathayatra. The Chariot or Car festival of Jagannatha (Vide IV. 5. 7). **Rishi.** A seer of spiritual truth.

Rudraksha. *Elaeocarpus Genitrus.* The seeds of this tree formed into beads for rosaries.

Sabda Brahman. Brahman as sound, as the Vedas.

Sadhaka. A spiritual aspirant. (Vide II. 1).

Sadhakabhava. The attitude of a spiritual aspirant.

Sadhana. Spiritual discipline. (Vide II. 1).

Sadhu. A holy man.

Saiva. A follower of Siva.

Sajina. A kitchen vegetable. *Legume* of the *morunga.*

Sakhi-bhava. The attitude of a female friend towards God.

Sakta. A worshipper of Sakti.

Sakti. Sometimes the word means a woman.

Sakya Simha. A name of Buddha, born in the Sakya clan.

Salagrama. A round stone symbol of Vishnu.

Sama, Dama, etc. The six treasures. (1) Keeping under control the internal and (2) external organs, (3) desisting from all worldly actions, (4) endurance, (5) profound contemplation and (6) faith in the words of the Guru and the Vedanta.

Samadhi. Profound concentration of mind, ecstasy.

Samhita. Collection or anthology; *Rig Veda Samhita=a* collection of Riks or a kind of Vedic hymns. *Manu Samhita=* collection of socio-religious rites and customs, prevalent and ought to be followed at that time, by Manu, the author. When referring to the Vedas it means the Mantra portion of them.

Samskaras. Impressions of past activities in previous births in the mind. The word also means purifying ceremonies.

Samskrit (Sanskrit). Once it was the spoken language of the cultured people of India. It is much cultivated all over India even now and Pandits speak it as fluently as their mother tongue.

Sanchita. Result of past accumulated Karma.

Sandesh. A kind of sweet.

Sandhini Sakti. The power of Brahman that preserves the universe.

Sandhi Puja. See Juncture worship.

Sandhya. The Vedic prayer said thrice a day in the morning, midday and evening.

Sankaracharya. The great commentator of the *Gita, Upanishads* and the *Brahma Sutra.*

Sankirtana. The chorus of the Lord's name and glory.

Sannyasa. The vow of a Sannyasin.

Sannyasin. One who renounces the world in order to realize God.

Sannyasini. Nun.

Saraswati. The goddess of learning.

Sastras, scriptures. The Vedas and other books in accordance with them.

Sattva (Guna). See Gunas.

Sattvika. Pertaining to Sattvaguna.

Savikalpa Samadhi. See Bhavasamadhi.

Siddhartha. A name of Buddha.

Sikh (ism). The religion founded by Nanak. A Sikh=a disciple, inasmuch as he lays the greatest emphasis on the grace of the Guru, who, according to him, is God Himself.

Silver mountain. The snow-capped Kailasa mountain in Tibet.

Simhavahini. Literally, a Goddess whose carrier is a lion. There is an image of Her installed in a temple at Jayramvati, the Holy Mother's birth-place.

Sita. The spouse of Sri Ramachandra, an incarnation of God.

Siva (Maheswara); The auspicious (Great God).

Sivalinga. A symbol of Siva, the male principle in creation, made of stone or other materials; a holy symbol worshipped with the holiest of motives viz., for the cessation of transmigration.

Sivaratri. The fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of the lunar month of Magha. In that night Siva is worshipped every three hours and fast and vigil are kept throughout the night.

Smritis. The body of traditional law, secular or religious.

Snanayatra. The full moon day of the month of Jyaishtha, the day on which the bathing ceremony of Jagannath (Puri) takes place.

Sraddha. An obsequial ceremony in honour of dead relatives, so named, as it is done with Sraddha or reverence to the memory of the deceased.

Sri. It is a term used before the names of those whom one wishes well, indicating prosperity, hence implying "may you be prosperous" or simply prosperous so-and-so. It connotes respect as well.

Srikshetra; The town of Puri in Orissa.

Srimati. The name of Radha.

Sriraga. One of the Ragas or melodies sung in the morning.

Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lilaprasanga. See Lilaprasanga.

Suddhodhan. The father of Buddha.

Sufi. A sect of Mohammedans, noted for their tolerance, love of God and persecution at the hands of the bigoted Muslims for their monastic tendencies.

Suka. Sukadeva. The great sage, the son of Vyasa, noted as the perfect specimen of Sannyasins, the Paramahamsas.

Sumeru. A sacred mountain.

S**ushni.** A kind of green.

Swadhishthana. See Centres.

Swaha. The Mantra uttered in offering oblations to gods.

Swami. A Sannyasin. The word is added to the proper name of a Sannyasin as a mark of respect. Swami=my lord.

Tamas (Guna). One of the three essences of Prakriti. (See Gunas)

Tanpura. A stringed musical instrument.

Tantradharaka. One who dictates Mantras from a book at the time of worship.

Tapas, Tapasya. Austerity.

Tappa. A style of singing, a mode of presenting a Raga through the introduction of an unconventional variation.

Tarkabhushana. It means the same thing as Tarkalankara.

Tarkalankara. A title given to a person learned in Logic.

Tarkavagisa. The meaning is the same as Tarkalankara.

Tarpana. Offering of libations to gods or forefathers.

Three fires. Figuratively, three miseries, (1) arising from bodily diseases etc.; (2) from living beings and (3) from natural phenomena such as rain, storm etc.

Tilaka. Sectarian symbol marked on the forehead and other parts of the body.

Tirthankaras. Jaina saints.

Tol. A Sanskrit school.

Tripurasundari. A name of the divine Mother.

Triveni. The confluence of the three rivers, namely, the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati at Allahabad.

Tulsidas. A great Vaishnava saint. His Ramayana, the crown-jewel of the Hindi literature, is very widely read in Northern India. **Turiya.** See Fourth.

Ulu. It is a sound uttered by Hindu ladies on ceremonial occasions with the help of the tongue striking against the inner parts of the cheeks alternately.

Upanayana. The ceremony of the investiture with the sacred thread.

Vaikhari. Articulate utterance.

Vaikuntha. Abode of Vishnu.

Vairagi. Literally a dispassionate man. A holy man following the Vaishnava religion.

Vaiseshikas. A class of dualistic philosophers like the Nyaya philosophers.

Vajra teachers. A class of Buddhist teachers.

Vakula. A tree *(Minusopos Elengi)* or its flower.

Valmiki. The author of the Ramayana.

Vamachara. The left-handed Sadhana. The heroic mode of Tantric worship. It is so called because the worshipper is taught, according to this method, to raise the Coiled Power from the basic centre to the thousand petalle lotus in such a way that the centres in the Canal Centralis are kept to the left. It is also held that "Vama" means "opposite" and in this discipline the aspirant

takes an opposite turn from the path of enjoyment to that of renunciation through sublimation.

Vanaprasthin. A man who having finished his duties as a householder, retires to a forest to lead the life of a recluse.

Vanalinga. A special stone-symbol of Siva.

Varanasi. Banaras.

Vasanta. (1) Seasonal Raga for the spring season, (2) the season itself.

Vasudeva. The father of Sri Krishna.

Vata. See Humour of wind.

Vatsalya. See Five moods.

Vayu. See Humour of wind.

Veda. The most ancient authoritative scripture of the Hindus. Amongst other things, it deals with injunctions and prohibitions regarding actions.

Vedanta. The last part of the Vedas, dealing with meditation and the knowledge of Self-Brahman.

Vidya Maya. The power of Brahman leading Godward. (Vide III. 3. 20. See Avidya Maya).

Vidya Sakti. (1) The power of Brahman that leads Jivas on to It. (2) A woman of godly nature. (See Avidya Sakti).

Vijaya. The tenth day of the bright fortnight of the lunar month of Aswin on which the image of Mother Durga is immersed in water.

Vilva. Wood apple *(Aegle Mormelos).*

Vina. A stringed musical instrument.

Virat. The Cosmic all-pervading Being identifying himself with the entire gross world.

Vireswara. Another name of Swami Vivekananda, so named because he was believed to have been born at the blessing of the Vireswara Siva in Kasi.

Vishnu. An aspect of Brahman preserving the universe.

Visuddha Centre. See Centres.

Visvesvara, Visvanatha. The Lord of the universe. The presiding deity of Kasi.

Vivekananda. The principal disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, who first carried his message to the West and founded the Sri Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

Vital airs. They are Prana, Apana, Samana, Udana and Vyana, performing various life-giving functions in the body.

Vyakarana. Grammar.

Vyasa. The author of the *Brahma Sutras* etc.

Yamuna. A tributary of the Ganga.

Yasoda. The foster-mother of Sri Krishna.

Yatra. A kind of dramatic entertainment accompanied by a large number of songs.

Yoga Maya. The Maya of Brahman consisting of the three Gunas.

Yogananda, Yogen, Yogin. A monastic disciple of the Master.

Yogi, Yogin. A man who has realized God. One who is in the habit of meditating on God. (See *Gita* 6.47)

Yugi, Jugi. The weaver caste of the Hindu society.

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